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ABSTRACT

The documents make up the final report and executive summary of the Special Teens and Parents (STP) study which investigated the impact of certain provisions of P.L. 94-142 (the Education for All Handicapped Children Act) on 16 learning disabled secondary students and their parents. Part I of the final report describes the study design (a clinical-ethnographic methodology); and the students (in terms of both personal and educational background). Part II looks at the impact of evaluation, individualized education program (IEP), least restrictive environment, parental involvement, and procedural safeguard provisions of P.L. 94-142. A description of class environments is appended. Among the findings discussed in the executive summary are the following: although the results of the evaluation permit a precise definition of a student's learning disability, parents often did not understand what the definition meant; the STP parents viewed the IEP document with skepticism but valued the IEP conference as an opportunity to discuss other issues related to the student's total educational program, such as possible careers and post high school education; students in self contained classes perceived stigma associated with their placement although not directed toward them personally; the successful integration of the STP students into regular classes depended on type of class, academic ability and skill of the student, and motivation of the student; and disputes between parents and the school were usually resolved through an informal meeting. (SB)

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TELEPHONE • AREA 617-492-7100

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SPECIAL TEENS AND PARENTS

A Study of the Impact of P.L. 94-142 on Learning Disabled Adolescents

FINAL REPORT

November 30, 1980

Submitted To:

Barbara Hobbs
Education Program Specialist
Office of Special Education
and Rehabilitation Services
U.S. Department of Education
Washington, D.C. 20202

Submitted By:

Authors: Judith Andrews Agard
Ruth W. Brannon

Editors: Pamela E. Richards
Sally Weiss

Judith Andrews Agard Contract Manager	Linda W. Lewis Quality Control Reviewer	C. Swearinger Management Reviewer

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The Special Teens and Parents Study has benefitted from the insights and support of many individuals. William Morse assisted us in the development of the study's methodological clarity and conceptual unity. Mary Schonberger and Dorothy Harimis forced us to reflect on the practical realities of our observations.

Abt Associates Inc. staff performed myriad activities in support of the study. Helen Chase prepared the background material on Custis County; Sharon Barry prepared the summary of the STP students presented in Chapter 2. Stanley Mopsik and Linda Lewis critiqued all study materials as technical quality reviewers; Christopher Cross and Christine Swearingen monitored the project's management. Pamela Richards and Linda Clowe produced the final document. The cover design was created by Meredith Lightbown.

The project has had three helpful and supportive project officers: Kathleen Fenton, Linda Morra and Barbara Hobbs.

The special education administrative staff at Custis County Public Schools, and the teachers and guidance counselors at the West Forest and O'Brian High Schools have all been gracious and cooperative in opening their doors and windows so we could observe the STP students and their educational programs. Although we did not view a rose garden, we did view creative and conscientious efforts to provide a solid, quality special education.

The STP students -- Stuart, Sally, Wally, Tim, Vicky, Anne, Julian, Eddie, Bill, David, Dick, Peter, Ted, Deeter, Jock and Ben -- are, of course, wonderful, and so are their parents. There is a long chain of ideas and actions that link a law to a specific individual. The STP students have helped us move along the links in that chain. The least restrictive environment is not a legal concept anymore; it is Vicky struggling to pass typing. The conversations we had with the STP students and their parents and teachers created a picture -- sometimes confused and not always clear -- as to what P.L. 94-142 means in human terms. From this picture we have developed our own insights, which are presented in this report. This work is dedicated to the STP students and their counterparts -- wherever you go, whatever you do, rev 'em up!

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PART I. DESCRIPTION OF THE SPECIAL TEENS AND PARENTS STUDY

1.0 STUDY DESIGN

1.1 Introduction

The Special Teens and Parents (STP) Study was designed to be a four-year longitudinal study of the impact of P.L. 94-142 on learning disabled (LD) adolescents and their parents. The study, conducted by Abt Associates Inc. for the Office of Special Education, sought to determine the immediate and long-term consequences of certain provisions of the law as they affected (1) learning disabled students in secondary schools and (2) those responsible for developing and implementing policies, programs and procedures to benefit these students.

The study consisted of 16 contrastive longitudinal case studies of selected learning disabled adolescents. Each case study provided information on the student's educational experiences from multiple perspectives. Each case study was intended to continue four years and to include the transition from high school to work or post-secondary training.

This report presents findings from the first year of student study and analysis. The findings are based on the case narratives prepared for each of the target students. The focus of the study was on determining the impact of four provisions of the law: comprehensive individual educational evaluation, individualized education program, placement in the least restrictive environment; and parental involvement and procedural safeguards.

The remainder of this chapter contains a discussion of the study's conceptual framework and study design, field site and case study student selections, instrument development and data collection procedures, and data analysis. The target students are described in the second chapter. The impact of the provisions of the law are discussed in Part II.

1.2 Conceptual Framework

The STP Study investigated both the direct and indirect consequences of P.L. 94-142 by examining closely the experiences of the adolescent and his or her family. The study concentrated on the impact of the provisions of P.L. 94-142 in two broad areas: personal and educational. The personal area included personal feelings, social skills and behavior, school attitudes,

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and behavior and career choice. The educational area included educational history, referral and evaluation, current placement and services, academic performance and progress, and parental involvement in the education process.

Although P.L. 94-142 is having a direct impact on parent and student awareness by focusing attention on the rights and respect due handicapped individuals, its major impact is indirect, operating through the translations of the provisions of the law into administrative and instructional practices that are implemented with a particular student and his or her family.

For each of the four broad provisions of the law that are the focus of our study, we address certain issues:

- What are the specific requirements of the law related to the provision?
- How are these requirements implemented in secondary school programs and practices for learning disabled students?
- What is the impact of these school programs and practices on learning disabled students and their families?
- What insights can be offered to guide those concerned with developing secondary school programs and practices for learning disabled students?

1.3 Field Site and Case Study Student Selection

The field site for the STP study, Martha Custis County, is a large, suburban, county-based school district located within a major metropolitan area. The county is typically middle class, young, and predominantly white. The median family income for the county was $28,500 in 1977; the median house value was $68,200. The population of the county is very mobile with about 20 percent of the households moving during any given year, although almost half of those moves are within the county. The mobility rate of families with high school students is somewhat lower.

The population of Martha Custis County is well educated: 79 percent of the population 25 years and older are high school graduates; 30 percent are college graduates. The county enjoys a healthy industrial climate and employment situation. About three-fourths of the employed population hold white collar jobs. Exhibit 1 describes Martha Custis County in contrast with the rest of the state and the United States.

Exhibit 1

Comparisons of Selected Demographic Characteristics, 1970
Martha Custis County, State, United States, and Regions

	Martha Custis County	State	United States	North-east	North Central	South	West
Education:							
Median School Years	12.9	11.7	12.1	12.1	12.1	11.3	12.5
% High School Graduates	78.8	47.8	52.4	53.0	53.7	45.1	62.3
% College Graduates	30.3	12.3	10.7	11.2	9.6	9.8	13.2
Employment:							
% in Civilian Labor Force	56.6	54.7	56.7	57.7	58.2	54.8	56.6
White Collar	75.2	49.0	48.2	51.3	45.8	45.4	52.7
Blue Collar	17.2	36.2	35.9	35.6	37.2	37.7	31.1
Agriculture	0.2	2.7	3.1	1.0	4.4	3.7	3.1
Service	7.4	12.1	12.8	12.2	12.7	13.1	13.2
Income:							
Median Income	15,707	9,049	9,586	10,537	10,134	8,075	10,263
% Below Poverty	3.5	12.3	10.7	7.6	8.3	16.3	8.9
% Earning:							
Less than $2,000	2.2	6.6	5.9	4.1	4.7	8.9	4.8
Less than $5,000	6.2	22.0	20.3	15.6	17.3	27.9	17.9
Over $25,000	14.6	4.7	4.6	5.8	4.4	3.4	5.3
Per Capita Income							
1973	6,488	4,886	5,041	5,435	5,263	4,447	5,225
1969	4,542	3,410	3,733	4,162	3,839	3,126	3,999
Housing:							
% Owner Occupied	62.0	62.0	62.9	57.6	68.0	64.7	59.0
Median Value	35,400	17,100	17,000	19,400	16,700	13,500	20,500
Median Number of Rooms	6.3	5.2	5.0	5.1	5.1	4.9	4.7
% over 1.01 Persons/Room	3.6	8.0	8.2	6.5	7.3	10.3	8.4
Median Rent	164	92	89	92	89	71	106

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1970 Census of Population, General Social and Economic Characteristics, State, PC(1)-C48. Characteristics of the Population, United States Summary, Volume I, Part 1, Section 2, PC(1)-01. 1970 Census of Housing, General Housing Characteristics, State, MC(1)-A48. General Housing Characteristics, United States Summary, HC(1)-A1. Survey of Current Business, August 1974.

Note: Regions of the United States are defined following standard Bureau of the Census definitions. For a detailed listing of states comprising each region, see Part 1, 1970 Census Users' Guide, page 77.

The Martha Custis County Public School District has an enrollment of 129,652 students. The district's secondary program is organized into junior high or intermediate schools for grades 7 and 8, and high schools for grades 9 through 12. The district offers a departmentalized self-contained program for learning disabled students that is housed in several district high schools. In addition, each high school in the district offers LD resource classes. There is no special vocational development program for LD students; they are expected to participate in regular vocational education. The district has had at least three years of experience with self-contained learning disabilities programs at the high school level.

Once approval for the STP Study was granted by district administrative and research staff, two high schools, O'Brian and West Forest, were selected as sites. These two high schools offered both self-contained and resource class programs for LD students. Sixteen students in ninth and tenth grades were selected from both the self-contained and resource programs in each high school as follows:

	Resource	Self-Contained
O'Brian High School	3	5
West Forest High School	4	4

The selection of students involved several steps. First, nominations of students were solicited from the teaching staff in both high schools. Teachers were encouraged to consider the following points in their nominations:

- Potential for parent/student cooperation;
- Length of time in the school district;
- Possibility of being reclassified or dismissed from special education (teachers were told we were interested in following some students who had a high probability of moving to a less restrictive environment);
- Sex (there are relatively few female LD students and we wanted at least two females in our study);
- Socioeconomic level (both high schools serve low and high SES neighborhoods);

- Whether the high school was the home-based high school for the students;
- Vocational education plans (teachers were informed that we wished to study some students in vocational educational programs);
- Degree of behavioral dysfunction displayed (students differed in the degree to which their learning disabilities were confounded with behavior or motivation problems); and
- Nature of the learning disability (students differed in their level of functioning and in the degree to which their learning handicap was considered to be a specific learning disability).

Once potential students were identified, school staff contacted the families of nominated students to discuss the study with them and to obtain their consent for Abt Associates staff to contact them. As interested families were located, Abt staff met with parents, discussed the study with them, obtained their written consent, and collected baseline data on parents' involvement in high school decisions regarding their child and their view of the child's school program. Also, at this time, plans were made to interview the student.

1.4 Instrumentation Development

The clinical/ethnographic case study affords an opportunity to examine multiple types of data over an extended time period for selected students. We were aware of the problem of designing instrumentation for a longitudinal study and the difficulty of maintaining comparability from year to year so that within-case (over time) and across-case generalizations could be made. However, the line of questioning repeated across multiple sources provided a rich body of information from which to develop case narratives. While there is no easy solution to some of the methodological problems encountered in a small-sample, longitudinal case study, several considerations were taken into account in designing instrumentation:

- The use of skilled case analysts familiar with the learning disabled population and the provisions of P.L. 94-142;
- The use of multiple types of data collection;

- The choice of certain established interview and observation techniques known to be sensitive to changes over time; and
- The choice of multiple measures and (where appropriate) multiple respondents to validate the measurement of each characteristic or outcome measure.

The original instrument battery contained: unstructured interview reporting forms for interviewing parents, students and teachers; observation forms for use when observing the student in class; and forms to record data abstracted from records. Subsequently, unstructured interview forms were developed for interviewing the directors of the LD self-contained programs, guidance counselors and other administrators.

The instrument development was accomplished through several steps. First, we identified the items of information needed to describe the programs and practices that had developed in response to the P.L. 94-142 provisions of concern to the study. At the same time we identified the particular personal and educational information we needed for each student and family. Second, we identified potential sources for obtaining both student and program information. Third, having identified the item content of the instruments and potential sources, we designed specific interview, observation or record abstraction guidelines to obtain the needed information from each potential source. The guidelines served the dual purpose of structuring the data collection process -- whether interview, observation or record abstract forms -- and providing a recording system for the data collected. Fourth, for the unstructured interview guidelines, each information item was translated into suggested phrases or lead-in questions and probes were developed to be used by the interviewer to elicit the necessary information from the respondent.

The initial unstructured interview and observation guides served as a useful starting point for collecting baseline data in a consistent and uniform manner. Subsequent interview protocols were developed using a more ethnographic approach. First, the new information needed on each student from that particular interview session was determined and a common set of interview questions prepared. Second, each student's past case narrative was reviewed and follow-up issues of particular concern noted for that student. Thus, the subsequent interview and observation guides were tailored to the individual student's situation, with in-depth information collected on specific issues or student experiences of particular interest to the study, and general information on personal and educational characteristics collected on all students.

Although the data collection instruments were unstructured in format, strategies to insure uniform data collection across all cases were developed. Standardization was encouraged by having each case analyst review all the case narratives, suggesting particular lines of inquiry to be explored with each student and agreeing on the common questions, expansions and probes to be pursued in the interview situation. Joint interviewing occurred in the early stages of the study to assure that both case analysts explored the same issues in the same manner.

During the process of developing the lines of inquiry, both the intents and the actual phrasings were reviewed for clarity, sensitivity and accuracy of measurement. A critique for each instrument was provided by a representative of the respondent group to which the instrument was targeted. Each external reviewer was asked to give verbal feedback to project staff on the item intents and to suggest phrasings different from those generated by the project staff.

The entire package was reviewed by the project's technical reviewers and the feedback from these reviewers was used to develop a final version of the entire package.

1.5 Data Collection

An ethnographic case study methodology requires that data collection be conducted by case analysts who are thoroughly familiar with the issues of concern to the study and who are skilled interviewers and observers. Because the study was longitudinal, the case analysts had to remain constant over the years of investigation. Using consistent and skilled case analysts not only assures quality data collection and analysis, but also assures school personnel, the students and their parents that their contact persons will remain constant and are knowledgeable about and sensitive to the underlying concerns of LD students.

Although one of the original STP case analysts left the study, her departure occurred before most of the students and families assigned to her had been interviewed. Only three students experienced a change in case analysts, and this change occurred immediately after the initial interview session. All subsequent interviews with these students were conducted by the same case analyst.

Case analysts were assigned to students according to the system presented below:

	O'BRIAN HIGH SCHOOL		WEST FOREST HIGH SCHOOL	
	Resource	Self-Contained	Resource	Self-Contained
Parents/Students	Agard	Brannon	Brannon	Agard
School Staff/Records	Brannon	Agard	Agard	Brannon

This assignment system assured that the two case analysts became familiar with both types of programs, both schools, and both sets of parents, students and school staff. Also, this division of labor ensured that both case analysts had a maximum familiarity with all the study students and with the operation of special education programs in the two schools. It minimized certain biases, and provided each study respondent with a greater sense of confidentiality about the content of the interviews or observations, since neither case analyst was in the position of having "all the information" or listening to "both sides of the story" about the students' progress.

The data collection efforts are summarized in Exhibit 2.

Information on the students was derived from three interviews that occurred in the fall, winter, and early summer. Interviews with teachers occurred in the winter and late spring. Observations of the students in class occurred during the late winter and throughout the spring. Every student was observed in at least two classes and most students were observed in both regular and special education settings. The students' regular and special education teachers and guidance counselors were interviewed. Interviews were also conducted with the senior resource teacher and the LD self-contained program director at each high school. Interviews with the administrative supervisor for all LD programs provided district policy and program information.

1.6 Data Analysis

The analysis of case study data has to be qualitative in nature. There may be quantifiable data collected on each target student (e.g., grades, test scores, class rank), but the small number of students in the study does not permit any form of statistical manipulation of those data.

The first and most critical step in the analysis of case studies was the development of the case narrative. Case narratives were prepared for all the students in the study using the information derived from interviews, observations, and existing records. The case narratives were updated quarterly based on the raw data collected. The second step involved a synthesis and interpretation of the case narratives to derive a composite picture of learning disabled adolescents, and an issue-oriented discussion of the impact of the selected P.L. 94-142 provisions.

In an ethnographic study, data collection and data analysis proceed in tandem. The case narratives serve as an intellectual springboard, with a particular student's experience suggesting a new impact consideration to be investigated in further interviews, expanded on in later case narratives, and ultimately included in later impact discussion reports.

Exhibit 2

Year I Data Collection Calendar

Fall 1979	Winter 1980	Early Spring 1980	Late Spring 1980	Summer 1980
Student Interviews	Student Interviews	Class Observations	Class Observations	Student Interviews
Parent Interviews	Parent Interviews	Teacher Interviews	Teacher Interviews	Parent Interviews
Administrator Interviews	Teacher Interviews	Guidance Counselor Interviews	Administrator Interviews	Record Review
	Record Review			

2.0 DESCRIPTION OF STUDENTS

The STP students were selected from both resource and self-contained programs in two high schools, O'Brian and West Forest. A brief description of each of the students is provided in Exhibit 3; Exhibit 4 outlines the educational placement of each student. In the paragraphs below, we summarize the personal and educational background of the STP students.

2.1 Personal Background

2.1.1 Personal Description

The STP students comprised 3 girls and 11 boys. All the students were 16-17 years old during the school year with the exception of Anne Tupper, who was 18. Wally Quinn and Jock Fine were ninth graders; the other students were all in tenth grade. Anne Tupper was the only student who had seriously considered dropping out of school, although that has recently become an attractive option to Julian Lombardi, who wants to join the military and Sally Benson, who wants to get married.

Although there was wide variety in the physical characteristics of the STP students, in general appearance and demeanor they resembled a typical group of high school students. With the possible exception of Wally Quinn, who was in the ninth grade and still physically immature, none of these students would be identified as learning disabled from his or her physical attributes.

2.1.2 Family Background

The great majority of the STP students came from intact families. However, one student lived with foster parents; one student's mother had recently died; and two students had divorced parents. Eddie Lawrence's parents were quite elderly; Julian Lombardi's were of foreign birth with limited abilities to speak and understand English. One student, Stuart Warren, had a child of his own, for whom he had assumed primary financial responsibility.

None of the families were poor or on welfare; a few were wealthy. Many of the parents held professional positions, and quite a number ran small businesss of their own.

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None of the families were poor or on welfare; a few were wealthy. Many of the parents held professional positions, and quite a number ran small businesss of their own.

Exhibit 3

Brief Description of STP Students

SELF-CONTAINED STUDENTS*

O'Brian High School

Sally Benson is a lovely, blond girl who lives with her four brothers and sisters in a foster home. While she was living with her natural mother, her family moved frequently, which disrupted her schooling. The past two years represent a period of educational continuity and stability. Sally has achieved academic success in her self-contained classes, where she feels protected and not pressured. She has made friends with other LD students and is seriously involved with a fellow LD student whom she plans to marry. Sally was very angry when the school district reassigned her to a self-contained program in a school close to her foster parents' home. She threatened to quit rather than change schools; an interim, informal, unsanctioned solution has been for her boyfriend to drive her to O'Brian each day. Sally has not passed her minimum competency tests and has such difficulty with basic skills such as making money change that it is difficult for her to find a part-time job.

Eddie Lawrence is the youngest son of a very large family. His parents are quite elderly and he is the only child at home. Eddie was transferred into public schools from a parochial school setting which could not give him the specialized help he needed to support his regular academic program. For the last several years, Eddie has been mainstreamed for about half his courses. He has done well academically, has passed his competency exams, and has had several opportunities to move into the resource program. Eddie has refused to consider resource placement because he has a great aversion to change. He will, however, be enrolled in a vocational program for the coming year and be on the job-site for part of every day.

Julian Lombardi is the middle son of an immigrant family who runs its own business. Julian and his siblings work very hard at home and at the business. His parents do not speak English very well, which inhibits their ability to communicate with the school about Julian's learning problems. Julian has become very discouraged by school during the past year and has attempted to join the military. Unfortunately, his reading ability is so low that he has not been able to pass the screening exams.

Anne Tupper, at 18, is the oldest student in the study. She lives at home with her parents. Anne's mother had a difficult time convincing school personnel that Anne was not "just lazy" and should be evaluated to determine what her learning problems were. Since Anne has been in the self-contained program she has received mostly A's in her classes despite her chronic absenteeism. She functions well in the less threatening, non-pressured special class environment.

Stuart Warren has recently become the father of a baby girl whom he is helping care for and supporting financially. During the summer Stuart worked two jobs; he will continue to work after school and on weekends during the school year. Stuart's ability level is low, and he has to work hard on to succeed in his self-contained classes. Stuart has always resented not being able to attend his home-based school, which is very near his home and a social center for his friends; he was therefore pleased when he was reassigned to the new self-contained program in his home-based school.

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* Student names are fictitious.

Exhibit 3 (Continued)

SELF-CONTAINED STUDENTS*

West Forest High School

Wally Quinn is a thin, shy, timid, insecure and somewhat hunched ninth-grade boy who seems to suffer more than his share of abuse from other students. He has virtually no friends, and despite having been promised he would never have to change schools or programs again, he was transferred to a new self-contained program in the high school two blocks from his home. Wally is able to do the academic work in his self-contained classes but requires considerable individual help.

Vicky Mallack is a very attractive, charming teenager whose language and communication skills have recently matured to the point where she has been able to make friends with girls in the regular program. She works diligently in her classes. Although occasionally she seems dependent on her teachers and parents for help, she is generally able to use these resources effectively to help her cope. Next year, Vicky will be in a child development vocational program at her home-based high school.

Bill Smith is an extremely shy and frequently hostile young man. This past year he attended a carpentry program in the mornings at a vocational center and returned to West Forest for physical education and English. Neither the Vocational Center nor West Forest is his home-based school. Next year Bill will be involved in a nonpaying work/study experience at a construction job site run by the school. Although he is capable of extremely good carpentry work when motivated, Bill's attitude has deteriorated this past year, and he has not accomplished as much as he could. He has failed PE, a course he must pass to graduate, and there will be no opportunity to take PE or earn a PE credit at the job site. He has extremely poor verbal skills and serious difficulty with reading.

Tim Michael is a small, slow developing young man who does reasonably well in his self-contained and vocational classes, has several friends, and has generally been able to find part-time jobs. Next year, Tim will be in a new career exploration class offered by the LD self-contained program. In the fall, the students will explore several career opportunities, selecting one as a work/study site for the following semester.

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* Student names are fictitious.

Exhibit 3 (Continued)

RESOURCE STUDENTS*

O'Brian High School

Marshall "Deeter" Shuman is an attractive, articulate and sociable wrestler who has been in special programs since elementary school. Deeter works hard and diligently at his school work and has managed to achieve much in his regular classes. He expects to attend college. Although Deeter was recommended for dismissal from special education after his last triennial, his resource teacher and his parents agree that he should remain in the program at least for his junior year, which is critical in terms of college preparation. Deeter agrees with this decision. Deeter is the only STP student taking classes designed primarily for college-bound students. The classes are difficult and demanding; however, he has done quite well using the resource class support very effectively.

Ben Long is a student who was so tired of being labeled LD that he insisted on being withdrawn from the special education program. Ben is very interested in mechanics, small engines, cars, trucks, and construction. He is in the second year of a vocational program in auto body repair and is surviving in his regular classes with support from his parents.

Jock Fine is a ninth grade student who receives his math instruction through the resource program. He and his mother have a homework program that includes four to six hours of study and preparation each night. Although school staff view this as very restrictive of Jock's free time and recreation, Jock doesn't seem to mind too much, although he is looking forward to his family's moving to a rural town in another state where the school demands won't be as tough.

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*Student names are fictitious.

Exhibit 3 (Continued)

RESOURCE STUDENTS *

West Forest High School

Dick Bison is the middle son of wealthy parents. He has a long history of receiving special help and was in self-contained classes prior to his current resource placement. Dick is an athlete and is committed to attending college on an athletic scholarship. His most recent academic year indicted an increased awareness on his part that he must make more of an effort to study and ask for extra help so that he could improve his grades sufficiently to be eligible for college.

David Graves is a student from a financially well-off family. He has been a special education student since early elementary school. This past year, David failed several courses; next year, he will repeat the 10th grade in a local private school which has a special education program. David is the STP student with the most clearly articulated commitment to a specific career--that of emergency medical technician. Although he talks about his career plans and has read all the material in the career center on the subject, he has done little academically to prepare himself for this goal.

Peter Lazer has been accepted into the resource program after years of personal frustration because he did not perform as well academically as his siblings despite a high verbal IQ. Peter's academic potential is possibly the greatest of all the STP students. This past year Peter was only moderately successful; he had real trouble in terms of both behavior and grades in several classes. Next year, however, Peter has dropped the resource class and will be following a very heavy academic schedule. He has decided that he must take certain subjects to qualify for college, even though there exists little past evidence that he can maintain and pass such a heavy load. He will, however, be maintained as a monitored student.

Ted Thompson is the only son of a very recently widowed professional who lives in the affluent community around West Forest. Ted had an unsuccessful academic year; he passed all courses but got Ds in several. His father has removed him from the resource class for next year, partly because he was convinced by the math teacher that the resource teacher did not know enough math to help Ted with his courses. Ted has signed up for a heavy academic schedule next year, seemingly at his father's urging.

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*Student names are fictitious.

Exhibit 4

Description of STP Students' Special Education Placement

Student	School	Home-Based School	Grade	Placement When Selected	Placement During Study	Regular Classes	Special Classes
Dick Bison	West Forest	Yes	10	Resource	Resource	English World Culture Algebra Biology PE	Basic Skills Review
Jock Fine	O'Brian	Yes	9	Resource	Resource	English World Geography Earth Science Orchestra PE	Basic Skills Review (Math)
David Graves	West Forest	Yes	10	Resource	Resource	English Earth Science Algebra Accounting PE	Basic Skills Review
Peter Lazer	West Forest	Yes	10	Resource	Resource	English Biology Industrial Arts/ Electronics	Basic Skills Review

Exhibit 4 (Continued)

Student	School	Home-Based School	Grade	Placement When Selected	Placement During Study	Regular Classes	Special Classes
Ben Long	O'Brian	Yes	10	Resource	Vocational	English Auto Body PE/Driver's Ed	
Deeter Schuman	O'Brian	Yes	10	Resource	Resource	English Biology Geometry Current Affairs PE/Driver's Ed	Basic Skills Review
Ted Thompson	West Forest	Yes	10	Resource	Resource	English Biology Algebra Government PE	Basic Skills Review

Exhibit 4 (Continued)

Student	School	Home-Based School	Grade	Placement When Selected	Placement During Study	Regular Classes	Special Classes
Sally Benson	O'Brian	No	10	Self-Contained	Self-Contained	PE	English Consumer Math Biology World History
Eddie Lawrence	O'Brian	No	10	Self-Contained	Self-Contained	Algebra Mechanical Drawing PE	English Earth Science Consumer Math
Julian Lombardi	O'Brian	Yes	10	Self-Contained	Self-Contained	Mechanical Drawing Art PE	English Biology Consumer Math
Vicky Mallack	West Forest	Yes	10	Self-Contained	Self-Contained	Biology Typing PE	English Consumer Math Psychology/ Sociology

Exhibit 4 (Continued)

Student	School	Home-Based School	Grade	Placement When Selected	Placement During Study	Regular Classes	Special Classes
Tim Michael	West Forest	Yes	10	Self-Contained	Self-Contained	Biology General Maintenance PE/Driver's Ed	English Consumer Math Psychology/ Sociology
Wally Quinn	West Forest	No	9	Self-Contained	Self-Contained	Chorus PE	English General Math World Geography Basic Skills Review
Bill Smith	West Forest	No	10	Self-Contained	Self-Contained Vocational	Carpentry PE	English
Anne Tupper	O'Brian	No	10	Self-Contained	Self-Contained	Home Ec. PE	English Consumer Math Biology World History
Stuart Warren	O'Brian	No	10	Self-Contained	Self-Contained	Industrial Arts PE/Driver's Ed.	English Consumer Math Biology World History

2.1.3 Personal Feelings

The students' personal attitudes toward themselves covered a wide range of feelings. There were students with very poor self-concepts, and others who appeared relatively secure and self-confident. A few seemed depressed, anxious and ill-at-ease with themselves; some were basically happy and satisfied with things. Some were not yet mature enough to cope with their problems and limitations; some were very mature and had an admirable ability to marshall their resources and use home and school assistance to their advantage.

In general, the students in resource classes were somewhat more self-confident, assertive and independent than those in self-contained classes. However, one of the most significant changes in the self-contained class students was their increase in self-confidence. With the exception of Bill Smith, who was extremely insecure and self-deprecating to begin with, all of the students in self-contained classes evidenced growth in self-esteem and independence during the past year.

2.1.4 Social Skills and Behavior

All but one of the students in the resource classes had good social contacts and friends and enjoyed dating. The students in self-contained classes, on the other hand, had a somewhat harder time locating and establishing friends. One student, Wally Quinn, appeared to have no close friends at all. Two of the three girls depended exclusively on one close friend or boyfriend for social contact. Vicky Mallack and Eddie Lawrence had only one or two friends in the fall but developed several new friendships during the school year. It may be that their social skills are growing with their increased self-confidence.

The problem the self-contained students have in making friends may be the result of several factors:

- the lack of verbal skills among students in the self-contained classes;
- the generally lower level of maturity of these students;
- the smaller pool of potential friends -- a result of the small number of students in self-contained classes and their less frequent contact with students in regular classes.

For example, in the fall, Vicky Mallack's conversation was punctuated by long, noticeable pauses during which she worked out what she was going to say. During the year, Vicky's communication skills improved tremendously, and her self-confidence increased. Yet, there were no other tenth grade girls and only one eleventh grade girl in the LD self-contained program at West Forest. Vicky had only three classes that were not self-contained classes -- one of which was a predominantly male class for academically unsuccessful students -- and lunch period in which to make social contacts with students in the regular education program.

The students in both resource and self-contained classes secured their friends from a number of different sources:

- from their neighborhood (important for Tim Michael and Stuart Warren);
- through their siblings (important for Vicky Mallack and Bill Smith);
- through sports activities (important for Julian Lombardi, Deeter Schuman and Stuart Warren);
- from special education classes (important for Sally Benson, Eddie Lawrence and Anne Tupper);
- from regular classes (important for Vicky Mallack and Eddie Lawrence).

2.1.5 School Attitudes and Behavior

The students were more or less evenly divided in their general attitude toward school: some enjoyed school; others disliked it or saw it as something that had to be gotten through. Whether or not the students liked school seemed to be related not to the type of special education program they were in, but rather to how much their social life revolved around school and how they saw school affecting their future.

One issue on which there was no disagreement was the difficulty of school: all the LD students found school hard. Some students found school unpleasant and frustrating for this reason. Other students liked school -- despite its difficulty -- because of the social opportunities or interesting vocational programming it offered.

With respect to their special education classification and placement, practically all the students disliked being LD students. Most, however, had learned to accept the label and appreciated the extra help they received. It is interesting to observe, though, that as soon as the LD students felt their

LD placement was no longer benefitting them, or that they could get along without it, they wanted out. This was what happened with Ben Long, who balanced his LD label against the benefits of his resource class and decided the class was no longer worth the label. Wally Quinn, on the other hand, knows he could not survive academically without the help he receives in his self-contained class, so he accepts the program -- and the label.

2.1.6 Career Choice

The consideration that students have given to their future occupations is in part determined by the high school they attend. Vocational preparation is stressed in the West Forest self-contained program, and most of the students in that program have at least thought about what they want to do or have explored different career possibilities. Some have very definite career plans: Wally Quinn wants to work in construction or be an auto mechanic (both unrealistic, unfortunately); Vicky Mallack wants to be an aide in a nursery or day care center. Vocational preparation is not stressed as much in the O'Brian self-contained program. Although some of the students at O'Brian have career interests (e.g., Eddie Lawrence wants to work in construction), as a rule they have not had as much vocational direction and have not been given as much encouragement in this area. There is more emphasis on academic preparation at O'Brian.

Vocational considerations are not a concern for resource students; they all assume they will either go to college or be able to obtain a reasonable job. Of the resource students, only Ben Long is actively involved in vocational training.

2.2 Educational Background

2.2.1 Education History/Referral and Evaluation

Most of the students in the study, both those in self-contained classes and those in resource classes, were identified as having learning problems in their elementary school years. Some received special education during these years; others received remedial services, tutoring, or other forms of help; a few repeated grades. Half of the students who were in self-contained classes last year started out in resource classes in elementary school and later moved to a more restrictive program; only a few of the students now in resource classes started out in self-contained programs. Thus, there has been some shift in terms of students' placements, but this has not been substantial and has been primarily in the direction of less restrictive to more restrictive.

Both the students in self-contained and resource classes are described in various psychological reports as having a wide variety of specific learning disabilities. But the principal reason why they were initially placed in special education programs and why they remain there is their academic deficiencies. For students in self-contained classes, there is, on the average, a two-year differential between their grade equivalency scores and what their IQ's predict their level of achievement should be. For the students in resource classes, this gap is generally only about one year.

2.2.2 Current Placement and Services

All of the students in resource classes attended their home-based school. But because there is not an LD self-contained program available in every high school, some of the LD students in self-contained programs had to attend a school that was not their home-based school.

As a rule, the students didn't like having to go to a school other than the one in their own neighborhood. However, once a student got established in a school, made friends, and became familiar with the program and teachers, he or she was generally not very happy about shifting to another school -- even if this was his or her home-based school. Thus, when a new LD self-contained program opened in their home-based school, Wally Quinn, Sally Benson and Anne Tupper were quite angry and upset about the prospect of having to change schools. Stuart Warren, on the other hand, was pleased to be moving back to his home-based school and his neighborhood friends.

All the students in resource classes were mainstreamed for all classes except their resource class, which is called Basic Skills Review. All the students in self-contained programs were mainstreamed for physical education, driver's education if they were eligible to take it, and usually some type of vocational program; otherwise, their degree of mainstreaming varied. Most were in self-contained classes for the majority of their academic courses.

2.2.3 Academic Performance and Progress

This past year, all the self-contained program students passed all of their self-contained classes. And, except for Tim Michael (who got an F in driver's education) and Bill Smith (who got an F in physical education), they passed all their regular classes, too. However, the self-contained program students had extreme difficulty passing the state minimum competency exams, and some of their teachers were concerned that some of them might never pass. Teachers also reported that the self-contained students seemed to have reached a plateau in their development of basic skills. In general, they needed a lot of individual help and had to work very hard to do well academically. Although many of the self-contained students worked reasonably hard, a growing number seemed to have lost their energy and enthusiasm for hard work. Some cut class often or arrived late; many who did attend class were inattentive.

All of the students in the resource program have now passed their minimum competency exams. Their grades in both their regular and resource classes were generally what they earned, and this year the grades were not very good. An overall decline in motivation and performance was reported in a few of these students this year, and there were some mild behavior problems. It appears that some of the students in the resource program, too, are beginning to tire of working hard.

2.2.4 Parental Involvement

All of the parents in the study were very supportive of their sons' and daughters' education. They generally attended the annual IEP conferences, and most of them attended an average of 2-3 additional meetings at the school each year. Some of the parents had arranged meetings with teachers to discuss particular problems or concerns. Parents of the STP students typically also maintained contact with the school through telephone calls and written notes. Among the STP families, there have been no disputes that required formal settlement between parents and the school, and in fact there have been few major disagreements at all. When these have occurred, they have been resolved by discussion and clarification, compromise, or the school's accession to parental wishes, even those that the school felt were not in the student's best interests.

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The major expenses incurred by the parents in the study were indirect -- e.g., attending meetings or arranging jobs for their children. A few parents had paid at one point or another for private schools, therapy, testing, or tutoring. When they could afford it, parents incurred these expenses willingly. Parents considered these expenses as optional, in much the same way music lessons or sports programs are viewed.

PART II. IMPACT OF P.L. 94-142 PROVISIONS ON LEARNING DISABLED ADOLESCENTS

3.0 IMPACT OF EVALUATION PROVISIONS

The STP study focuses on provisions of P.L. 94-142 related to four areas: educational evaluation; individualized education program; least restrictive environment, and parental involvement/procedural safeguards. In the following sections, we discuss the P.L. 94-142 regulations related to evaluation, the implementation of these regulations with the STP students, the impact of the implementation efforts, and implications of the study findings for policymakers, program administrators, teachers, parents and students.

3.1 Evaluation Provisions of P.L. 94-142

Under the regulations promulgated to implement P.L. 94-142, each local education agency has the responsibility to identify, locate, and evaluate all children who are handicapped and in need of special education and related services. The evaluation is to determine whether a student is handicapped and the nature and extent of special education and related services the student needs.

Although no specific types of tests are mandated by the regulations, the tests must be designed to assess specific areas of educational need, rather than produce a single, general intelligence quotient, and no single procedure can be used as the sole criterion for determining eligibility or placement in an appropriate educational program. A student must be assessed in all areas related to a suspected disability, including, where appropriate, health, vision, hearing, social and emotional status, general intelligence, academic performance, communication abilities, and motor abilities. All test and evaluation materials used for evaluation and placement must be selected and administered in a manner that is not racially or culturally discriminatory. All tests must be administered in the student's native language. Tests must be validated for the specific purpose for which they are used. The evaluation must be conducted by a multidisciplinary team which includes at least one teacher or other expert with specialized knowledge of the suspected area of disability. Tests must be administered by personnel trained in their use.

After an initial placement in a special education program, each student must be reevaluated at least once every three years, although more frequent evaluations may be requested by the student's parents or teachers.

The regulations require that the results of the evaluation be used to determine whether a student is handicapped and the nature and extent of the special education and related services the student needs. The regulations also require that a full and individualized educational evaluation be carried out before a student's initial placement in a special education program. Thus, the evaluation results are intended to provide the principal factual basis for determining the student's designated handicap, eligibility for special education, and initial placement. In reviewing the student's placement and in making subsequent placement decisions, the placement team must consider information drawn from a variety of sources, including aptitude and achievement tests, teacher recommendations, physical conditions, social or cultural background and adaptive behavior. Some of this information could be derived from the student's educational evaluation; thus the evaluation results may also contribute to later placements decisions as well.

Placement decisions must be based on the student's IEP. The IEP -- particularly those items related to current levels of performance, annual goals and short-term objectives, and specific special education and related services to be provided -- should reflect the results of the evaluation. For the student who has been evaluated for the first time and whose initial IEP is being developed and initial placement determined, the appropriate interpretation and use of the evaluation results is assured by requiring that a member of the evaluation team, or a person knowledgeable about the evaluation procedures and results, participate in the meeting to develop the initial IEP.

3.2 Implementation of the Evaluation Provisions

3.2.1 Identification

The P.L. 94-142 regulations require school districts to establish procedures to locate and evaluate all students who are handicapped and in need of special services.

The identification process in Custis County is initiated when a parent or teacher makes a referral for an evaluation to determine whether the student may be eligible for special services. After elementary school,

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parents are more likely to make referrals as they become increasingly concerned about their adolescent child's lack of academic success or lack of interest in school. The referral is submitted to the guidance counselor, who then meets informally with the school psychologist to review the student's records and discuss the student's academic situation. At this point other nonspecial education interventions such as lower level academic classes may be recommended instead of a special education evaluation. Or the referral may be turned over to a screening committee comprising the director of guidance, the school psychologist, the school visiting teacher, the guidance counselor assigned to the student, and the senior resource teacher who serves as chair. This committee reviews the referral and the student's records and determines whether the student is a possible candidate for an evaluation. Other options which may be considered include remedial reading, psychological counseling, or placement in classes for the academically unsuccessful.

If a decision is made to evaluate the student, the guidance counselor sends parents a request for permission to conduct the evaluation. Once permission is received, the school has 30 days to complete the testing, which is done by school staff. The resource teacher administers the educational tests, the psychologist conducts the psychological evaluation, and the visiting teacher completes the social history. Parents are asked to submit the results of a physical examination of the student. Parents usually pay for the physical examination, although the school will do so if parents cannot.

3.2.2 Evaluation Procedures

Each of the STP student's initial or preplacement evaluation included psychological tests, a social case history, educational tests, a physical examination, and classroom teacher reports. Students whose initial evaluations occurred after the implementation of P.L. 94-142 also had a classroom observation. After information from all these sources had been gathered, it was reviewed by a multidisciplinary team who made a recommendation concerning the student's placement and need for special education services. However, the evaluation procedures for the triennial review do not seem to adhere strictly to those outlined above. For STP students, new psychological and educational tests were administered and classroom teacher observations collected; frequently, however, social case histories and health records were not updated.

- **Psychological Tests**

Custis County does not require specific psychological or educational tests. It does require that two types of tests be given -- intelligence tests and achievement tests. In addition, the tests must come from an approved list of tests for the county. The psychologist determines on an individual basis how many and what specific types of tests should be administered to each student.

The psychological examination typically includes tests designed to measure intelligence levels and specific visual-motor responses, and tests to determine student attitudes. Most STP students were given the Wechsler Intelligence Test revised for children (WISC-R), although some students were given the Slosson I.Q. Test. Students whose first tests were given in elementary school were more likely to have Slosson I.Q. scores; in more recent years, the WISC-R has been used predomimantly. The test most frequently used to determine the nature of specific disabilities is the Bender Motor Visual Gestalt. Although the test is designed to measure overall intellectual ability, it is used by the psychologists in Custis County to reveal visual perception characteristics as well as general characteristics of the students' cognitive processes. Teachers occasionally administer a battery of tests called the Malconesius Specific Language Disability Tests, which permit the identification of visual or auditory processing difficulties. The Malconesius is a non-normed test, which makes it less appropriate for purposes of comparison with other students and which is therefore being phased out of use in the county.

Screening tests given for specific learning problem areas include the Wepman Auditory Discrimination Test, the Templin-Darly Test of Misarticulation, the Beery Visual-Motor Inventory, the Detroit Auditory Memory for Words, and the Detroit Visual Memory for Letters.

Other tests are given to determine personality traits, attitudes and cognitive ability, including the Thematic Apperception Test, the Rotter Incomplete Sentences Blank, the Draw-A-Person Test, the Kinetic Family Drawing, and the House-Tree-Person Test. Almost all the STP students received the House-Tree-Person Test, the WISC-R, and the Bender Gestalt.

The number of psychological tests given and the extent of a students' full evaluation record varies considerably. One student may have eight tests given to him or her while another may have only an IQ test, achievement tests and teacher reports. Some students' records contain reports of evaluations conducted by private schools and by private physicians, psychologists, psychiatrists and/or by independent assessment clinics; other students' records contain only the results from the Custis County school evaluation.

- Educational Tests

The principal educational evaluation measure used in Custis County is the Wide Range Achievement Test (WRAT), which is used to determine grade equivalency in reading, spelling and arithmetic. These tests, which are normed on a national sample, are a critical element in determining whether there is a severe enough discrepancy between educational achievement and intellectual ability to warrant designating a student as having a learning disability. Other educational tests are occasionally administered, including the Key-Math Test, the Metropolitan Achievement Tests, and the Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests. Additional tests to determine achievement as well as give clues to functional problems are the Durrall Oral Reading Test, the Gray Oral Reading Test, the IOWA Word List and the Ayers Handwriting Scale.

- Social Case History

Each family whose child is being evaluated is visited by a social worker, who compiles a social case history. The case histories have similar components -- the prenatal history of the student, the number and ages of siblings, and a description of the parents' occupations, education and major areas of concern about the child. The parents' concerns about the student's learning difficulties are carefully noted, particularly their recollection of the evolution of the child's problem in school and any remedial activities which the parents may have arranged privately for their child.

- Physical Examination

The evaluation process also includes a physical examination to identify special physical conditions which may affect a student's ability to succeed in school. For some students, particularly those with convulsive disorders like Anne Tupper and Jock Fine, the amount and type of medication prescribed are detailed. Anne Tupper's physician also recommended that she be excused from participating in physical education activities because of her propensity for seizures when over-exerted.

- Teacher Comments

Finally, teacher comments are included in the evaluation. For those STP students referred during elementary school, the teacher was usually the initial referring agent, and his or her referral commented on the student's classroom behavior. Inability to do assigned tasks, immaturity, attention-seeking, inability to concentrate, and overall academic underachievement were the reasons usually cited in the referral. For the initial evaluations and triennials at the intermediate and high school level, all of a particular student's teachers were asked to provide information on the student's strengths and weaknesses. Teacher comments were specific to the student's performance in a particular class and usually included a description of the behavior and attitude of the student in addition to an academic evaluation. With the exception of Anne Tupper, none of the STP teacher reports included observations from a school guidance counselor or other supportive staff.

The test results and summary report forms are submitted to an area review board that reviews the results and determines whether the student is eligible for placement in a learning disabilities program. If this is a preplacement evaluation, parents will be notified of the results of the evaluation and invited to an IEP meeting to develop the student's IEP and consider the school's placement recommendation. If the evaluation is a triennial reevaluation, parents are notified whether the results confirm continued eligibility and/or whether a change in placement is recommended based on the evaluation results. Frequently the learning disabilities resource teacher or self-contained program director and the school psychologist will discuss the results of the evaluation and any recommended placement changes with parents.

Although most of the STP parents can describe their son's or daughter's learning problem, they are not familiar with specific test results. The few parents who are aware of specific test results have had private psychological or neurological tests conducted on their children and may have had more extensive and thorough debriefings. On the other hand, parents who seek out testing for their child may be more attuned to the results.

3.3 Impact of the Evaluation Provisions

3.3.1 Identification

The P.L. 94-142 regulations require that school districts establish procedures to identify student's who may be handicapped. Students with learning disabilities are usually identified in elementary school by their classroom teachers. This was true for all the STP students except Anne Tupper and Peter Lazer, both of whom were identified and referred by their parents after they encountered difficulties in high school. Except for Anne and Peter, all the STP self-contained students were receiving special services in self-contained settings and all the resource students were receiving services in either resource or self-contained settings prior to seventh grade.

Generally, the STP students were identified because of academic failures and poor academic behavior (e.g., inattention, failure to complete work). For the STP students identified in elementary school, parental concern was not the principal factor, although it was important in keeping the evaluation process moving. Nor was disruptive behavior a factor in the referral of the STP students. The critical factor seemed to be that teachers recognized an element of "brightness" in these students that was inconsistent with their poor academic performance. Those students who did not reveal this "brightness" (even though they may, in fact, have had relatively high intelligence scores) were not likely to be referred for an evaluation. It is possible that students from professional families are more likely to have received the verbal stimulation and wide experiential background that produces this "brightness."

Only rarely are learning disabled students identified for the first time at the high school level, and then usually because of serious parental concern and continued pressure for school attention.

In both of the high schools involved in the STP study there are academically unsuccessful students (students whose reading and/or mathematics skill levels are seriously below their grade level) whom regular teachers thought could benefit from the support offered by the resource class or the alternative academic program offered in self-contained classes. Regular teachers often commented that there were two or three students doing much worse than the LD students and who really needed help, and that the LD students often performed better than their non-LD counterparts. Teachers expressed frustration that the students they referred for testing were not accepted into the LD program. Unfortunately, the regular program alternatives for students in academic difficulty are limited. Remedial reading programs have severely limited enrollments, and low level sections or classes for academically unsuccessful students are offered only in a few subjects.

Although it is not disputed that there are sizeable numbers of academically unsuccessful students for whom there are relatively few regular program options available, the responsibility of special education vis-a-vis these students is unclear. Under the somewhat fluid and flexible definition of learning disabilities provided in the regulations, it seems reasonable to predict that, if evaluated, a 15-year-old student with average intelligence who is reading, writing, spelling or doing mathematics at the third to fifth grade level would probably be eligible for a learning disabilities program -- even if he or she did not have a specific identifiable learning disability in the classical or theoretical sense.

Faced with large numbers of students potentially eligible for learning disabilities programs and the increased costs and potential stigmatization that might be associated with such a result, school districts like Custis County have taken a conservative approach. In Custis County, a high school student in academic difficulty who is referred for special education is very carefully screened prior to an evaluation. This is done to determine whether the student is likely to have a genuine learning disability that requires special education services, or whether he or she has learning difficulties that may require some adjustment in his or her regular academic program but do not require or being placed in a special education program.

Not only is there a careful screening process, but the screening committee adheres firmly to a strict definition of learning disabilities, requiring a severe discrepancy between actual and potential achievement not attributable to any behavioral or motivational factors. The end result of this approach is that fewer students are referred, because teachers begin to feel it is not worth the effort; fewer students are evaluated, because the screening committee screens out most referrals as being for learning difficulties, not potential learning disabilities; and fewer students are placed in special education programs.

An alternative approach might be to expand the learning disabilities programs by: encouraging referrals and identifying "at-risk" students through reviewing report card grades, standardized test scores and results on minimum competency tests; allowing a more liberal interpretation of the definition of the term "severe discrepancy," and allowing the screening process to permit more students whose eligibility for a learning disabilities program is questionable to be recommended for an evaluation. This approach would result in more students being identified and referred, more students receiving evaluations and probably more students being determined eligible to receive special education services. Such an approach would, of course, place increased demands on limited school programs and financial resources.

3.3.2 Placement of STP Students

The evaluation results contribute to decisions regarding the eligibility and placement of students with learning disabilities in three general ways: determining whether the student has a learning disability and, if so, the nature and extent of that disability; determining the academic strengths and weakness of the student; and determining an appropriate initial placement.

- Determining the Disability

To be considered a learning disabled student in Custis County, a student must exhibit a deficiency in one or more of the basic cognitive skills (e.g., decoding or encoding) and must show a severe discrepancy between potential and functional ability in one or more of the following areas: oral expression; listening comprehension; written expression; basic reading skill; reading comprehension; mathematics calculation; or mathematics reasoning. Severity has been defined by Custis County as being 10 standard score points below expected functional level, given measured ability (based on an intelligence test) and chronological age.

- Determining Strengths and Weaknesses

The tests used in Custis County enable school staff to judge the areas of functional weakness of a student and the gap between expected and actual grade level performance.

A student's strengths and weaknesses are typically the focus of both the psychological assessment and the teacher comments sections of an evaluation. The psychological assessment discusses cognitive strengths and weaknesses -- Eddie Lawrence, for instance, is described as being strong in his ability to abstract verbal information and to relate parts to a whole. His weaknesses are related to visual organization when faced with a task requiring imitative reproduction. Eddie's teachers observed that he possesses good verbal reasoning abilities and conceptual abilities. Weaknesses not noted by Eddie's teachers include problems with spelling and written language as well as reading.

Frequently, teacher comments focus on noncognitive areas such as attitude, motivation, and behavior. A student like Deeter Schuman is described as having a good attitude, because he works very hard to overcome his learning problems and has succeeded to a great degree, whereas a student like David Graves receives many negative teacher comments about his poor motivation and approach to school. This analysis of strengths and weaknesses is an important contribution to the placement decision.

• Determining Initial Placement

The results of the evaluation are reflected in the initial placement decision, but the placement decision must be based on the student's IEP. The results of the evaluation are also considered in developing the student's IEP.

Whether the evaluation team recommends placement in a resource or self-contained setting is determined primarily by the degree of discrepancy between expected and actual functional levels. For the STP students, resource placement was associated with a discrepancy of two grade levels or less, self-contained placement with a discrepancy of three grade levels or more. The other factors influencing the placement recommendation are: the student's attitude and motivational state; parent and student preferences; and potential duration of the need for special services. Exhibit 5 presents the grade-level discrepancy and IQ ratings of the STP students at the time of their initial placement.

The discrepancy rule creates problems for students, parents and teachers who must decide whether a student whose functioning level approaches his or her potential or expected level should continue in the program or be dismissed from special education.

Exhibit 5

Intelligence Test Scores and Achievement Deficiency at Time of Initial Placement

	Intelligence Test Score at Initial Placement			Achievement Grade Level Discrepancy at Initial Placement		
Student	Verbal	Performance	Full Scale	Reading	Spelling	Arithmetic
RESOURCE STUDENTS						
Dick Bison	Average	80-89	*	2.1	2.5	2.4
Jock Fine	104	72	88	4.0 above	3.0 above	2.0
David Graves	*	*	* (Superior)	0.6	1.2	1.8
Peter Lazer	108	94-114	105-117	1.2	2.5	1.8
Ben Long	*	*	92	0.0	2.1	2.1
Deeter Schuman	*	*	110	0.0	1.5	0.3
Ted Thompson	*	*	109	0.5	1.7	0.3
SELF-CONTAINED STUDENTS						
Sally Benson	65	101	80	6.8	6.0	4.6
Eddie Lawrence	107	118	113	2.0	*	*
Julian Lombardi	70-79	90-109	80-94	2.0	4.0	2.6
Vicky Mallack	80-94	72-90	77-79	**	**	**
Tim Michael	73	93	81	4.4	4.4	3.6
Wally Quinn	85	71	81	2.0	0.5	3.1
Bill Smith	72	108	87	**	**	**
Anne Tupper	77	86	80	3.1	3.2	1.8
Stuart Warren	73	95	83	3.2	3.2	1.8

NOTE: *Indicates initial placement data not available from student records

**Vicky Mallack was 3.8 years below grade level in reading, 5.1 years in spelling, and 3.7 years in arithmetic at the end of 9th grade. Bill Smith was 5.7 years behind in reading, 6.3 years in spelling, and 5.3 years in arithmetic at the end of 9th grade.

Three STP students are currently performing at levels close to their potential. In each instance, however, their teachers and parents feel that the support of the learning disabilities program is crucial to the students' continued success. Deeter Schuman, a resource student who is in some college-track courses, has very recently experienced a triennial review which showed no evidence of a discrepancy. His resource teacher and the school psychologist reviewing his files made a strong stand before the review committee that Deeter's progress would be reversed if he were forced out of the program at this time. So far Deeter has remained in the resource program.

Vicky Mallack's progress was reviewed last year, and she was recommended for dismissal from the program after completion of tenth grade. However, her parents and the learning disabilities staff in her school are convinced that dismissal would be disastrous for Vicky. They are seeking to continue Vicky in the program until graduation.

Finally, Stuart Warren, a student with serious intellectual deficiencies, is described by his teachers as plateaued at a second grade reading level with little hope of ever improving. Stuart's low potential kept him out of special education for years, because the discrepancy between his performance and his measurable potential was not severe enough to justify eligibility in a learning disabilities program. At the same time, his IQ scores were too high to justify eligibility in a program for the mentally retarded. He remained in regular classes, where he was totally unable to do the classwork, and each year he was passed on to a higher grade. Finally, by fifth grade, Stuart's verbal ability improved sufficiently to increase his IQ score, resulting in a discrepancy between his academic performance (which had not improved as fast as his IQ) and academic potential that justified eligibility in a learning disabilities program.

3.3.3 Instructional planning

The P.L. 94-142 regulations do not require that the results of the evaluation process be used for instructional planning. Yet, it seems reasonable that a process as comprehensive, time-consuming and expensive as a comprehensive educational evaluation should yield some information useful for instructional planning.

The LD teachers of the STP students have access to the evaluation information, and all had some knowledge of the student's learning disabilities profile. Yet, when planning an instructional program, teachers allowed the basic characteristics of the self-contained and resource programs to predominate over individual student learning characteristics. Self-contained classes offer small group settings and a less demanding curriculum in the expectation that less peer pressure and more academic success will improve self-image and increase learning. Only limited instructional distinction is made between students with auditory processing problems as compared with those with visual perception problems, although for those students who request it tests may be administered orally. The self-contained program is geared to students of overall low functional ability. This is not inappropriate in view of the fact that few students in the self-contained classes have only one problem. Eddie Lawrence is the only STP student who is considered to have a classic learning disability -- he is a dyslexic student. The other STP students have more than one identifiable learning deficiency, in more than one area. It may be practically impossible to derive instructional grouping categories based on specific learning disabilities into which all students would neatly fit.

Based on the evaluation results of the LD students, which almost universally indicated severe deficiencies in basic reading skills, the West Forest self-contained program has instituted an experimental basic skills reading program as the core curriculum in all its English classes. The reading program differs from the approach taken in the other self-contained classes by attempting to correct a common learning deficiency, rather than adapting regular curriculum content to the students' level of functioning.

For resource students, the information from the evaluation is more useful as a support for interaction with regular teachers than it is for purposes of instructional planning. When a learning disabilities teacher approaches a regular education teacher to discuss why a student is having attention problems -- or fails written tests, or takes two or three times longer than other students to finish assignments -- his or her position is legitimated by the battery of tests and expert opinions which have identified areas of specific dysfunction. For example, the physical education teacher gave Stuart Warren a passing grade in driver's education only after conferring with the LD self-contained program teachers about Stuart's "slowness". When the LD teachers were able to give concrete facts about Stuart's reading level, the driver's education teacher was willing to adjust Stuart's grade.

3.3.4 Information Integration

Custis County provides an opportunity for parents (but not students) to learn about the results of the comprehensive special education evaluation and subsequent triennial reevaluations. However, the LD students, like their non-LD counterparts, are almost continuously being evaluated in one form or another; and there is no systematic method to integrate these evaluations. Quarterly report card grades, end-of-year and (in some cases) even quarterly special education teacher reports, standardized school-wide achievement tests, and minimum competency tests results are available for each of the STP students students. Some students have (or will have) vocational assessments and college aptitude tests scores (SATs, ACTs), not to mention the extensive evaluation results obtained from private assessment.

It is not clear what procedures, if any, exist to help students and their parents assimilate the information gained through these tests when making decisions regarding the student's future. This lack of coordination and information-sharing may affect all students. It has potentially serious effects on students who have learning problems, because the decisions they must make about the future are already made more difficult due to the limited options caused by their learning problems. Any information which provides additional insight for parents and students thus becomes more important for handicapped students.

3.4 Implications of the Evaluation Provisions

In this section, we discuss the implications of our findings related to the impact of the evaluation provisions on learning disabled secondary students for policymakers, program administrators, teachers, parents and students.

3.4.1 Implications for Policy Makers

- Child Find Activities

Given the definition of learning disabilities in the federal regulations, there are probably considerable numbers of secondary school students who, if identified and evaluated, would be eligible for special education. Although the thrust of P.L. 94-142 is to locate and serve all students who meet the criteria for eligibility, the fiscal constraints under which local education agencies operate create a situation which discourages generous interpretation of the law. The policy implications of this fiscal reality in terms of restricting the number of students identified, evaluated and served, need to be recognized. If fiscal restraints are dictating a less than full effort to identify and place all LD secondary school students, school districts will need guidance and direction to counterbalance these constraints and pursue a vigorous child find policy at the secondary level.

- Instructional Planning

Evaluation activities occur primarily to aid in the identification and placement activities mandated by the law, not to provide a basis for instructional planning. However, much useful information is gained about each student in the initial and subsequent evaluation process. Our findings raise the question of whether more effort needs to be exerted in exploring ways that classroom teachers can have ready access to evaluation information and use this information to increase the effectiveness of their instructional activities.

3.4.2 Implications for Program Administrators

- Child Find Activities

Local school administrators are primarily responsible for creating an atmosphere which either encourages or discourages the identification of students for evaluation of learning disabilities. More inservice training can be provided to regular education teachers so that they can become effective in identifying students in need of service. More public awareness activities can be developed to inform both parents and students of the availability of learning disability programs. Routine review of students' grades, standardized test results and minimum competency test scores can also be used to locate at-risk students potentially eligible for special education programs.

- Administrative Needs Assessment

Student evaluations should provide useful needs assessment information for (1) determining numbers and types of personnel and specific staff skills needed to support secondary special education programs and (2) establishing priorities among programs. The fact that many students have serious reading difficulties might indicate a need to name a remedial reading specialist on the LD staff. Or if large numbers of students are identified as having auditory processing problems, school administrators might respond by looking for materials or programs which offer innovative ways to deal with this problem.

- Test Procedures

The testing procedures admit to wide variation in the number and types of tests given. Some standardization of these procedures -- such as establishing guidelines for determining the number and type of tests given, eliminating all unvalidated tests, and encouraging all formal evaluations to be equally comprehensive -- might help for facilitate the accuracy of the eligibility and placement decisions.

Program administrators should review the tests administered during the evaluation process to determine whether the degree of variability among students protocols is tolerable. If there is extreme variation, it might be advisable to establish recommendations as to the types of tests to be used so that comparable information is available on each student. This commonality in test instruments would increase the usefulness of evaluation results as sources of information for staffing and instructional planning decisions.

To assure the validity of the evaluation, schools should not use non-normed and unvalidated tests as part of a screening or evaluation effort. Input from guidance counselors should be sought, especially for the reevaluation process, so that their insights into a student's attitudes toward school, personal goals, and past performance can be incorporated into the decision as to whether the student should continue in the program.

Finally, it is important for both the student and the school system that the triennial evaluation and other formal evaluations be comparable with the initial evaluation so that fair assessment of the student's progress can be made.

3.4.3 Implications for Teachers

- Instructional Use

Teachers of learning disabled students should become familiar with evaluation results to facilitate their own assessment of student needs, to incorporate the findings into their instructional planning, and to provide support for discussions with regular education teachers. The first step involved in making constructive use of evaluation results in instruction is accessing the records, reading them, and assimilating the evaluation information with other information on the student. Then teachers should explore methods by which evaluation findings can be incorporated into the goals set for each student and into the instructional content of a class. At the very least, it is likely that the evaluation information will provide teachers with a greater overall understanding of the student's ability and needs. The information may even contribute to an improvement in the instructional activities. Finally, evaluation results may be used as an explanatory tool when dealing with regular teachers who need convincing that there is a better explanation of a student's problems in class than laziness or poor motiviation. Learning disabilities teachers should make sure they are prepared to explain specific learning problems to teachers of regular classes.

3.4.4 Implications for Parents

- Referral

Parents should request an evaluation of their child if they suspect he or she has a learning problem. Parents who have concerns about their high school child's progress should discuss this concern with teachers and program administrators; they should document carefully their own concern for their child's performance as well as what is said to them about their child's eligibility for special assistance.

Our findings indicate that parents were not primary initiators of evaluation, but the role of the parents could be expanded if they were more informed about the availability of special education programs.

Parents need to be assertive with school personnel when requesting that children who have chronic academic difficulties be evaluated for the learning disabilities program. If the school determines an evaluation to be unnecessary, parents may obtain an independent evaluation and present the results to the school for consideration; or they may request a due process hearing to challenge the decision not to evaluate.

- Involvement

Parents can learn a lot about the reasons for their child's learning problems as a result of the evaluation findings. This information can contribute to parent support and understanding of their child's problems and of the school's efforts to provide needed help. In our study there are notable examples of parents who are well-informed about their child's problem cooperating with the school. Wally Quinn's mother, for instance, works closely with the learning disabilities teachers in structuring services for Wally; she is very aware of the learning problems he has and what is being done to help him.

On the other hand, there are some STP parents who are not familiar with specific evaluation results, and who know only that their children are having learning problems. These parents, although generally supportive, have less influence over the educational program designed for the child. For example, Anne Tupper's parents, who sought an evaluation, are very glad to know that Anne has a "learning problem." They are content with this explanation, however, and have sought very little additional information about Anne's program. Consequently, they know little about what goes on at school.

- Communication With Student

Parents should recognize that their children may be fearful and confused about the findings from the evaluation process. Many of the STP students were identified as anxious and fearful by the psychologists administering the tests. Parents can play a very important role in helping students understand the meaning of the learning disability label and the importance of the help offered by special education programs. Therefore, parents should share with students their own knowledge of learning disabilities, encourage students to explore feelings of anxiety and the fear of being different, and be as supportive as possible of the students' efforts to overcome or compensate for their learning disabilities.

3.4.5. Implications for Students

- Explanation

Students should be given an explanation of the term "learning disability." Understanding what a learning disability is will contribute to a greater awareness of why the student has not been previously successful in school. This understanding can also help to minimize the fear of being different. Understanding what the program seeks to accomplish may also help a student accept assistance from the program more readily, greatly maximizing the benefits to be gained from participation.

To get this understanding, students should request explanations from parents, teachers, and program administrators about the purpose of the overall evaluation process and the purpose of specific tests. Students should obtain explanations of their learning problems and should understand how their learning problems might affect their future. Students should understand the goals of the learning disabilities program and how the program will help them cope with their learning problems.

4.0 IMPACT OF INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAM PROVISIONS

In this section, we discuss our findings related to the impact of the Individualized Education Program (IEP) provisions of P.L. 94-142. Our discussion is focused on two primary aspects of the IEP: the IEP conference and the IEP document. For each aspect, we consider the purpose, value and uses of the IEP conference or document, the participants involved and their role and responsibilities, and the substantive content included or considered.

4.1 IEP Provisions of P.L. 94-142

Provisions for the development and content of an individualized education program for each handicapped student are contained in §§121a.340-349 of the P.L. 94-142 Regulations, and have been interpreted in a policy clarification paper issued recently by the Office of Special Education. The regulations govern both the way in which an IEP is to be developed and the specific areas to be addressed in each student's written IEP document.

4.1.1 Development of the IEP

The IEP is to be developed at a meeting which must occur at least annually and which must involve, at a minimum, the student's teacher; one or both of the student's parents; a representative of the school qualified to provide or supervise the provision of special education; and the student, when appropriate. Although the teacher attending the IEP meeting does not have to be one of the student's special education teachers, at least one school staff member present at the meeting should be qualified in the student's disability area. Furthermore, if the student receives vocational education services, efforts should be made to insure that providers of vocational education services participate in the development of the IEP.

Parents are expected to play an active role in the IEP meetings, participating in the discussions about their child's special education needs and deciding, along with school staff, what services will be provided. Therefore, efforts must be made to insure that one or both parents are present or are otherwise afforded an opportunity to participate. Parents should be informed of the meeting in time to insure they can attend, and the meeting should be scheduled for a mutually agreeable time and place. If neither parent can attend the meeting, other methods such as telephone calls may be used to insure their participation.

Handicapped students should attend their IEP meetings whenever their parents decide it is appropriate. Secondary school students, especially, should be encouraged by the school and their parents to participate in their IEP meetings.

The written IEP document is to be developed at the IEP meeting. Therefore, it is not appropriate for school staff to present a completed document to parents for their ratification. It is appropriate, however, for school staff to come prepared with information about the student's present level of educational performance and recommendations regarding annual goals, short-term objectives and the nature of special education and related services to be provided. An important purpose of the IEP meeting is to provide parents with an opportunity to be actively involved in the major decisions affecting their child's education, but full parental involvement may not occur if parents perceive the IEP meeting as a meeting at which they are only required to agree to a completed process.

4.1.2 The IEP Document

The IEP document is intended to describe the special education and related services component of a student's educational program. However, modifications to the regular program required to compensate for the child's handicap should also be included.

The IEP document must include:

- a description of the student's present levels of educational performance;
- the annual goals and short-term instructional objectives established for the student;
- the specific special education and related services to be provided;
- a notation of the extent to which the student will be able to participate in regular educational programs;
- projected dates for initiation of services and the anticipated duration of services;
- appropriate objective criteria, evaluation procedures and schedules for determining whether short-term instructional objectives are being achieved.

It must also include a description of the physical education program provided and any vocational services the student receives including special modifications required by the handicapped student in either the physical education or vocational education classes.

The IEP document is intended to serve several purposes. First, the IEP document provides a method of accountability and protection for handicapped students and their parents. In addition, the provisions requiring participation of parents and, when appropriate, the student assures that their priorities and educational concerns are reflected in the final document. Second, the IEP document and, to some extent, the IEP meeting provide a mechanism for an annual review of the student's progress in the special education program and the continued appropriateness of the placement and the services provided. Third, the IEP document serves as a means of communicating with the student's regular teachers about any modifications needed in the student's regular program and about the supportive services available to them.

The annual goals contained in the IEP are statements describing what the handicapped student can reasonably be expected to accomplish in one calendar year in the special education program, and should be related to the present level of the student's educational performance. The short-term objectives are measurable intermediate steps between the student's present level of performance and the annual goals. They describe what a student is expected to accomplish in a particular area within a specified time period and thus provide a yardstick against which to measure a student's actual progress toward these accomplishments. Although the IEP should set the general direction for the student's special education program and may serve as the basis for developing a detailed instructional plan, it should not be regarded as an instructional plan per se.

The goals and objectives should be focused on offsetting or reducing the learning problems that result from the student's learning disability that are interfering with his or her educational progress. Based on the statements in the OSE IEP Policy Paper, it is reasonable to conclude that the goals and objectives should refer to the unique needs of the individual student. Thus, if an LD student with severe deficiencies in reading comprehension is in a self-contained English class and is receiving an individualized program designed to develop skills in his or her particular reading deficiency area, the IEP should document the goals and objectives for that student in that area.

If the same student, because of his or her reading deficiency, is placed in a self-contained science or world history class with other LD students who participate as a group in an instructional program derived from the regular program curriculum, with only minimal individual adaptations for the individual student, then the IEP need only state that the student is participating in the self-contained class and reference the applicable parts of the curriculum guide that apply to that class. It is not necessary to specify the general goals and objectives for the science or world history class as a whole; only the modifications in that program that are necessary to meet the unique needs of the specific LD student.

4.2 Implementation of the IEP Provisions

4.2.1 The IEP Meeting

Tentative IEPs for the STP students were all prepared during the late fall and during IEP conferences held in January and February. Parents were notified about the IEP conference by phone. Usually the IEP conference was held during school hours, and generally the parents of STP students attended the IEP conference. Typically, the student's mother attended, although in four or five cases the student's father attended as well. In many cases, the parents attending had to take time off from work. Transportation proved a problem for one family, and time away from the job for another. In these two instances, conference telephone calls replaced the IEP conference.

For the self-contained students, the participants at the IEP meeting were the parent(s), an LD self-contained teacher, and the director of the LD self-contained program -- acting as a representative of the school For the resource students, the participants were the parent(s), the resource teacher, and either the senior resource teacher or a guidance counselor Occasionally, the guidance counselor would "sign off" on the IEP but not attend the meeting. None of the STP students attended their IEP conferences The resource students were informed about their IEPs prior to the conference and had an opportunity to discuss the goals which their resource teachers were recommending for them and to offer new ones; the self-contained students were not involved in the IEP process, although they had considerable voice in certain decisions related to course selection and the degree to which they would be mainstreamed.

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At the IEP conference, the parents were asked to review and expand on a somewhat completed document. Many parents commented that although the IEP document per se was just some unnecessary paperwork that wasn't helpful to them, the time provided to discuss their child's progress and future needs and activities was very valuable, and the teacher's comments and responses were helpful. The parents of the STP students expressed a desire to be involved in their child's education primarily in two ways: first, they wanted to make contributions to the "big" decisions -- college, or no college, vocational program or academic program, change in schools, basic skills development or subject matter content; and second, they wanted to help their child succeed by assisting with homework, setting up incentive systems, and taking appropriate disciplinary action.

The discussions at the IEP conference (and other school meetings) usually revolve around these two broad areas. The IEP, however, deals with neither of these areas. The IEP does not provide an occasion or a framework to discuss long-term progress, potential or directions. Nor does it deal specifically enough with the student's program to permit a parent to determine where the home and family can offer assistance.

Thus, with regard to the IEP conference, we have a situation in which parents come to the meeting hoping to discuss (1) the long-range future direction for their son or daughter and the implications of this direction for general high school program planning, and (2) the impact they as parents might have on day-to-day school behavior, work or study habits and completion of homework assignments. Before these matters are discussed, they must consider the content of the IEP document, the content of which is generally not related to either of these concerns.

4.2.2 The IEP Document

The IEP form used by the learning disabilities programs in the high schools attended by the STP students included the content items specified in the Regulations. The IEP document included a statement of the student's current level of functioning. For the self-contained student, the current level of functioning was described for each subject matter area taught in the self-contained program. For resource students, the level of functioning was described in whatever areas the student needed support. The level of functioning was described in terms of educational skills (e.g., has ability to sound words phonetically, but needs strengthening in syllabication) rather than in terms of language or learning abilities.

Annual goals and objectives were specified along with evaluation criteria and the date when the goals and objectives would be reviewed or completed. For the self-contained student, the goals and objectives were organized around the subject areas taught in the self-contained classes. For example, there was one goal and two or three short-term objectives stated for English, another goal and short-term objective stated for world history. The goals stated represented a sample of the content area for each course. In some cases, the goals and objectives for a given subject were the same for several students, since all the students in a given class were taught as a group. Often, however, the IEPs of several students in the same class had different goals and objectives, each representing a different aspect of the subject to be taught. This resulted in the appearance of students in the same class being taught different content when, in fact, all students receive the same content with different parts of that content being recorded on individual IEPs. Sometimes, the content was expressed differently in the goals and objectives to reflect the different levels of student functioning. Thus, one student may have as a goal to write a detailed lab report based on an experiment, while another would have a goal to collect and record data from an experiment.

The goals and objectives and associated dates for review/completion for resource students were of two types: process goals and content goals. A process goal is one which cuts across subject areas and is related to a particular learning or study skill -- e.g., the student will be able to proofread his or her own written work and correct it. A content goal is subject specific -- as the student will be able to recognize adjectives and use them correctly. Content goals are generally remedial and, usually, in the areas of reading, spelling, grammar, vocabulary, or mathematics.

The IEP had a section to indicate additional special education services the student would receive and the dates when those services would be delivered. Physical education services were indicated separately, but vocational education services were not. A few of the LD students in the STP study received adaptive PE and that was noted; some received speech therapy and that was noted. Transportation, which was provided for those students who did not attend their home-based school, was not indicated.

The student's placement was described as a program for learning disabled; the type of service delivery as self-contained or resource; the type of instruction as small group or individual. Participation in regular education was indicated by a percentage. For the self-contained students, the students' mainstreamed classes were listed.

4.2.3 Development of the IEP

The development of the self-contained student's IEP document began with each self-contained teacher indicating the level of performance, a representative goal, short-term objectives, date of completion, and method and criteria for evaluation for each student currently instructed. The goals and objectives for a given subject area tended to be standardized, because class instruction was group, not individually, oriented. Once the LD self-contained subject areas teachers had provided their input, the director of the LD self-contained program compiled the information from teachers and other sources and prepared a tentative IEP document. The regular teachers were not involved in the preparation of the IEP document.

The resource teachers prepared the entire IEP for each resource student. The resource teacher often talked with the student before preparing the IEP to determine what goals the student wished to set for himself or herself. Often, these student goals were expressed in terms of passing or as grades -- e.g., student will pass all subjects with at least a "C". Resource students could also express priorities about their skill needs; -- e.g., to improve their spelling. Regular teachers were only involved in the preparation of the resource students' IEPs indirectly, if at all. By the time the resource teachers began working on the IEPs, they knew which subject areas and classes were causing their students the most trouble and where regular teachers had requested or were amenable to the resource teachers' support. Goals and objectives were developed with this knowledge in mind.

The timing of the IEP preparation and conference is based partly on convenience. Work on preparing an IEP begins once students are settled in their classes, schedules have been adjusted, and routines established. The self-contained teachers have developed the course content; the resource teachers have determined what their students' major skill deficiencies are.

Course planning for the following year is beginning and problems with regular class teachers or courses have surfaced.

The timing of the IEP preparation and conference mean that the IEP developed the previous year is not useful as a guide to instruction that occurs in the fall, since that IEP is nine months old. The student may have changed during the summer, his or her LD teacher may be different, and he or she is registered in new courses.

4.2.4 Relationship to the Regular Program

The IEP document and the process through which it is developed is restricted to the special education program. The level of performance and goals and objectives are described only for those educational areas in which special education services are to be provided.

The IEP document does not serve to coordinate the instruction offered by the several LD self-contained academic subject classes. Although the efforts of these teachers are coordinated informally by sharing common work space and by the administrative efforts of the LD self-contained program director, there is no attempt to coordinate the goals and objectives from several subject areas on the IEP. This is true even if a student's most obvious educational need cuts across subject areas -- for example, inability to follow directions and persist on a task until completion. The informal and administrative links between teachers may result in a unified effort on the part of all teachers to work on a particular problem, but the IEP document is not the mechanism for controlling or directing that coordination.

4.3 Impact of the IEP Provisions

4.3.1 Utility of the IEP Document

The IEP document is intended to provide written evidence that a handicapped student is receiving educational services based on his or her unique needs. The IEPs of the STP students do provide a written historical record of the services provided and goals and objectives attempted. However, the IEPs would be more useful as a means of ascertaining progress in meeting particular learning skill goals and objectives if: (1) they contained a notation indicating whether or when the student attained a particular objective; and (2) the goals and objectives from one year to the next were related in some systematic way. For the resource students who have the same resource teacher for more than one year, there is some continuity, especially if a particular learning problem is identified and that problem is the focus of the resource class instruction (e.g., spelling, basic math skills). For the self-contained students, each academic class is a separate distinct unit; while the curriculum may be implicitly developing a unified body of knowledge and skills over time, that structure and sequence (if it exists) is not evident from the successive yearly IEPs. Thus, although the IEP document serves as an historical record, it is not as useful as it might be.

Despite the expectation presented in the OSE Policy Paper that the goals and objectives serve as the basis for developing a detailed instructional plan for the student, teachers report the IEP does not direct their instructional planning. In fact, the converse is true. The self-contained teachers first develop a course outline for their class--usually based on the Custis County curriculum for the regular courses in that subject area. Then they develop goals and objectives for the class, and add these goals and objectives to the students' IEPs.

At the beginning of the year, resource teachers review each student's evaluation records and last year's IEP and previous year's work, talk with the student, give diagnostic tests, and confer with his or her regular teachers. From this information, the resource teacher decides whether the student primarily needs process or specific content help. Process help is variable and intermittent, the need arising when the student has assignments, reports or projects due in his or her regular classes. Content help is continuous and predictable, so the resource teacher can prepare a sequence of activities and assignments designed to build a particular content area skill. After the resource teacher has worked with the student a few weeks; goals, objectives and an instructional approach are developed that are later presented as the student's new IEP.

For both self-contained and resource students, the IEP developed the previous year is still on file, but its relevance to current year's work is limited. The current year's IEP documents the content of the present year's instruction -- not in the sense of a plan guiding the instruction, but rather as a report of what is, in fact, occurring.

The IEP does not indicate instructional priorities among goals and objectives. For the resource student, it may indicate the area in which most time and attention has been or will be focused. For the self-contained student, the IEP indicates a sample of what will be covered in each course. This may be the major curriculum activity, the next activity to be pursued, or the activity that is likely to be the most interesting. Parents do have priorities, but these are not always represented on the IEP document. Eddie Lawrence's mother is very concerned about his reading ability. Yet, the IEP does not reflect a priority for developing basic reading skills. Developing reading ability is the goal indicated for Eddie's English class, but there is no way to make his English class a priority.

School staff, like the parents of the STP students, viewed the IEP document with skepticism. School staff resented the time and effort involved in preparing the IEP document. From the special education teachers' perspective, the IEP document served no instructional purpose other than written, formal documentation that a student had a learning disability and was therefore entitled to certain special modifications in the regular instructional program. The exact modification had to be determined on a situation-by-situation basis. However, the fact that a resource teacher could point to where the IEP it said the student's level of performance in reading was several years below grade level entitled the LD student to have his or her tests administered orally by an LD teacher and to other special treatment. The written document made acceptable the student's claim for special assistance.

Similarly, the IEP sanctions the use of particular modifications in the way state minimum competency tests are administered. State competency test regulations allow those students whose IEPs indicate need for oral communication to have their minimum competency tests administered orally. Thus, the IEPs of these students serve as documented evidence of their need for modification of the state standard testing situation.

4.3.2 Utility of the IEP Conference

Despite the rather limited way the IEP document is used, serving primarily as written evidence that certain services are needed and are being provided, the IEP conference is viewed positively by teachers and parents -- not because of the importance of the discussion of the contents of the IEP document, but rather because of the opportunity to discuss other matters related to the student's educational program. The principal of the IEP conference is in bringing parents and special education staff together.

School staff try to encourage attendance, because they are convinced that the more parents understand and support the program and believe their child is getting appropriate individualized special assistance, the more progress the student makes. In general, the STP parents attended their child's IEP meeting because they were interested in hearing how their child was doing and what the plans were for the following year, and because they believed (incorrectly) that if they didn't "sign-off" their child would not be able to continue in the program.

The IEPs for the STP students follow a calendar rather than academic year cycle, so that conferences to develop the IEP for the remainder of the current year and the first part of the following year are developed during the late fall, winter and early spring. Coming when it does, the IEP conference provides an excellent opportunity to discuss the basic planning decisions that must be made. At the IEP conference, parents and school staff discuss career possibilities and college opportunities, what the requirements are for graduation, possible courses the student might take, last year's and last quarter's grades, why some were low and what can be done to pull them up, the schedule of assignments and other requirements in the student's classes, and how parents and teachers might help the student meet these requirements. Thus, the IEP conference serves as a time to reflect upon the set of education decisions that form the basis of the secondary student's educational program, expanding beyond the narrow requirements of the IEP document.

4.3.3 Factors Affecting the Utilization of the IEP Conference and the IEP Document

Thus far, we have described and commented upon the IEP meeting and the IEP document implemented according to the provisions of the law. We indicated that the legal content requirements of the IEP are not the only areas of concern to parents, and that the IEP document and meeting perform only some of the functions they could perform. Part of the reason why neither the IEP document nor the conference are as useful as they might be is that they focus on only one portion of the student's adacemic life -- the special education services and program -- and are not related to other, broader academic factors and concerns. In this section, we describe the nature of educational program planning at the secondary level, including course selection and the way in which a student's performance is evaluated, and suggest how the IEP document and IEP conference might be expanded or modified to address the student's needs in this broader planning area.

- The Educational Planning Process

Educational planning for secondary students can be viewed as a set of hierarchical decisions:

- -- Decisions related to career and post-high school education;
- -- Decisions related to the relative importance of an academic foundation and vocational preparation;
- -- Decisions related to the selection of courses, teachers and classes;
- -- Decisions related to the curriculum instructional goals and objectives established for each class to be applied to all students;
- -- Decisions related to evaluation procedures and criteria to indicate the attainment of the instructional goals and objectives of each class;
- -- Decisions related to adapting the goals, objectives, and grading policies to the LD student.

At the top of the hierarchy are two somewhat independent questions about the student's long range direction that the school, student and his or her parents should address:

- -- What are the career possibilities that interest you?
- -- Do you want to continue your education after high school in any formal way?

The LD student, just like his or her non-LD counterpart, must address the same questions; but in the case of the LD student, these questions take on special significance. Students with learning disabilities need to be advised that their particular learning problem may make certain aspects of a particular career more difficult for them. For example, is a career as a typist realistic for an LD student like a Vicky Mallack, who cannot do arithmetic well enough to set margins to type tables? If Vicky wants to be a typist, could she learn to compensate for her weakness by using a calculator?

By asking a co-worker to help set margins? By learning to set margins visually? By requesting that she not be given jobs requiring complex tabular presentations? Or by practicing the computations needed to determine margin positions until the procedure was mastered? If compensatory strategies are not practical, are there related jobs in the business world which Vicky can perform, such as being a receptionist, file clerk or office machine operator? Vicky is hard-working, loyal, diligent, personable, and dependable. Do these attributes counterbalance her learning disability?

Three of the STP students -- Ben Long, Bill Smith and Eddie Lawrence -- have definite career paths established; three others -- Julian Lombardi, Jock Fine and Stuart Warren -- will have employment opportunities available in family businesses, although they may not pursue them. Ben Long and Bill Smith are actively pursuing vocational programs that will further their chosen careers. Deeter Schuman, Dick Bison, Peter Lazer and Ted Thompson plan to go to college, but at present they have no definite plans for a career after college. None of the girls have solid career or college plans, although Vicky thinks she might like working in a nursery school or day care center. Tim Michael and Wally Quinn have neither career/college plans nor the opportunity to work in a family business. Both of these boys are in a self-contained program. Wally is only in ninth grade, so career plans may be premature at this point; Tim will be in a vocational orientation program next year.

Besides career planning, the second issue related to educational planning is choosing whether or not to continue one's formal education. Although career planning and post-high school education are two distinct issues, they are interrelated, since some careers require continued formal education. Some students, however, treat these issues as mutually exclusive.

Whether or not to go to college takes on special significance for a student with a learning disability. Are the student's learning disabilities so severe that continued education will only cause more frustration, pain and failure? Will the college or technical program offer any programmatic support? Will the student ask for assistance and be able to use it? How much support will the student need? Will the support available be sufficient? Is college necessary to pursue a career in a particular field? Are there other jobs in the same field that do not require college? Would it not be as satisfying to be an ambulance driver as a paramedic, and thus avoid two years of intensive post-high school training?

High school educational planning not only involves the question of whether or not to go to college, it also involves the question of which college one should choose. LD students may need to attend colleges that do not require a foreign language as an admissions or graduation requirement. They also need to know what special support services the college offers, (e.g., learning labs) and whether special compensations (e.g., oral rather than written examinations) are permitted.

College appears to be a realistic option only for those students in resource classes. Generally speaking, none of the self-contained students expected to attend college, nor were they advised to do so. There may be exceptions to that, however -- a guidance counselor mentioned he was having trouble deciding how to counsel an LD self-contained student who is a very good athlete and who is expected to be offered an athletic scholarship. His teachers agree that he will have a very difficult time academically in college, but want him to have the athletic opportunity. LD self-contained students from professional families present another interesting problem. Although the students may say they do not want to go to college, their parents may not dismiss that possibility entirely. These parents may decide that a carefully selected community college would be a good social experience.

Somewhat akin to the issue of career choice and continuing education is the issue of academic versus vocational training. For some students, a completely academic program would doom them -- if not to failure, then to total disgust and dislike of school. For others, their goals are not yet focused enough to make vocational education a reasonable alternative. Some students feel there is a stigma attached to vocational programs, or they do not want to leave their friends at their home-based high school, an attitude Ben Long believes is very childish. In addition, work/study programs conflict with sports and other extra-curricular, after-school activities.

Self-contained students are more likely to be advised to enter vocational programs than are resource students. Custis County offers a week-long career assessment program at another high school. Vicky Mallack and Tim Michael participated in this program last year, and both of these students have been actively encouraged to enter a vocational program. Tim's mother has been concerned that he might miss too much "basic work" if he enrolled in a vocational program, but this is definitely the program Tim is interested in.

There is a noticeable difference in the philosophy of the self-contained program directors at West Forest and O'Brian on the issue of vocational versus academic preparation. The program director at West Forest would like each LD self-contained student to graduate with a marketable job skill and experience. She encourages career planning and preparation starting in the ninth grade. The program director at O'Brian is more concerned with giving students a solid academic foundation. Despite the fact that Eddie Lawrence has a career in construction well in hand, he was encouraged by his parents to get as much academics as possible before he entered a skilled trade, and the school supported that decision. Sally Benson had a job after school in a nursing home that could have been incorporated into a work/study program permitting her to earn course credit for her employment. Given the fact that many of the LD students appear rather discontented with their academic courses, a vocational program seems like a very attractive alternative, especially if the student is interested and has some capability in that career area.

Addressing the issues of career choice, continuing education, academic emphasis and vocational education provides long-range directions to the secondary student's educational program. A somewhat more specific level in the planning process involves the selection of courses. Selecting courses for the following year is a complex decision process that involves weighing several factors:

- What subjects is the student required to take for graduation?
- What subjects are requested by the colleges the student might attend and/or the career the student might pursue?
- What subjects is the student interested in?
- What subjects will give the student difficulty because of the student's particular learning disability?

These factors must all be considered in planning the particular courses to be pursued the following year. Custis County students must take 18 credit hours each year (six courses), 15 of which are prescribed and 3 of which are elective. Students who are in vocational programs can waive either a science or a social studies requirement each year. The LD self-contained programs offer special classes in English, consumer math and social studies (e.g., world geography, psychology/sociology) and, at O'Brian, science. At both O'Brian and West Forest, students are mainstreamed for health/PE/driver's education and for any prevocational or vocational courses; at West Forest, self-contained students are mainstreamed for science courses.

Course selection for the self-contained students involves identifying regular prevocational or vocational programs in which the students have some interest and in which they can succeed without serious trauma. Self-contained students select their mainstreamed courses carefully, trying to avoid courses that will require a high level of reading or math ability or that are taught by teachers with reputations for being "tough." They also try to avoid classes in which their lack of skill will be apparent. Within the self-contained program the selection of courses is relatively automatic, since the course offerings within a required subject area are limited.

Resource students have more complicated problems selecting their courses. They must meet graduation requirements and college or employer preferences, but do not have the option of taking these courses as part of a self-contained program. Furthermore, basic skill review (the resource class) uses up one of their elective courses. The resource students also look for courses that are not "tough". Exactly what makes a course "tough" is hard to describe, and how one learns which courses are "tough" is hard to determine. Yet, such courses do exist, and the LD students, resource teachers and guidance counselors know which ones they are.

Ideally, once an LD student is required or elects to take a course it should be possible to identify a particular level or section that would be geared to his or her functioning level, and/or a teacher willing to work with and make modifications for the LD student's particular problems. There are several barriers to achieving this, however. First, information about the teaching style of a particular teacher may not be known to the student, the guidance counselor or the special teachers.

Although most teachers have reputations that circulate among both the students and faculty, and the meanings of euphemistic course descriptions (e.g., consumer chemistry) are well known, there are always a few new teachers and courses for which information is not available. Furthermore, even where the information is known, very often it cannot be used. Student class schedules are prepared by computer, and it is impossible to specify a particular teacher or a particular section of a class in the computer input system. For example, it is not possible for an LD student to request an English section or teacher that will emphasize creative writing; a student has to take whatever English teacher is assigned. If there are two sections of the chemistry class for college-bound students, taught by different teachers, the student cannot elect one teacher rather than the other. Of course, if the school decided to make one section of the chemistry class for higher ability students and the other for lower ability students, then the school would be responsible for assigning the students. Ability grouping has disadvantages for the LD student, however, because often the lower section is composed of disinterested, unmotivated students who slow the pace of instruction and disrupt the class.

Often, there is no choice of teacher or level -- if one registers for that course, he or she will have that teacher and level of instruction. This can sometimes work to the student's advantage if he or she knows that a particularly effective teacher is the only person available to teach a subject such as accounting. Then, a student who elects to take accounting, he will have that teacher. Regardless of whether the reason is lack of information, inability to program the computer or no real choice, not being able to specify a particular teacher or section makes it difficult to plan an individually tailored class schedule for the LD student.

Even within the self-contained program, the scheduling process makes it difficult to assign LD students to particular sections of a self-contained English or math class based on their current level of functioning. Grouping the LD self-contained students into different sections of the self-contained English classes by reading level becomes a "hand-scheduling" operation. Since hand-scheduling takes staff time, this often means that LD self-contained students are not scheduled into a routine until several weeks after the school year starts.

Although it may not be possible initially to match an LD student with an appropriate teacher or level of a course, it is possible, although difficult, to get him or her removed from a particularly bad situation. Usually, this involves some negotiations. To change Dick Bison's English class, for example, the resource teacher had to determine first whether the teacher whom the student requested had space in her class and was willing to have Dick join it. Then the teacher had to convince the guidance counselor that Dick was not changing teachers because he wanted to avoid the "harder" work in the other class but because he wanted a greater emphasis on creative writing. Although it is not easy for an LD student to change teachers or sections, it is easier for them than their non-LD counterparts. As one guidance counselor put it: "If one of the resource teachers asks for a change for one of her students, I make it, but other students have to appeal all the way to the principal."

The next level of specificity in the program planning hierarchy is defining the particular curriculum goals and objectives for the courses the student is taking. In the regular classes, the goals and objectives are set by the Custis County curriculum guides and departmental regulations. Regular teachers are willing to individualize the goals, objectives and criteria for achievement only under certain conditions. Many of the regular teachers believe that the LD students in their classes don't need any special help. This is particularly true if the class is a lower level section, such as consumer chemistry, or one that the academically talented student normally would not take, such as the current affairs class. Many of the regular teachers remarked that the LD students were doing much better than some of their non-LD peers. Furthermore, most of the regular teachers believe that if the LD student is "working hard" or "really trying", he or she can learn the material and pass the course -- possibly doing quite well.

Regular teachers believe that if an LD student has a problem, it is due to a lack of effort and not lack of ability. Working hard and really trying translates into completing assignments, attending class regularly, paying attention, contributing to class discussions, asking for extra help and, occasionally, doing work after school. With only rare exceptions, regular teachers begin with the working hypothesis that everyone in the class is capable of doing the assigned work and achieving the goals and objectives set for the course. An LD student who is in academic difficulty because he or she is frequently absent from class, fails to complete his or her homework or class projects, or has not asked for help is given short shrift. Those LD students who are diligent and hard-working and still have difficulty are usually given the benefit of the doubt. They are given adjusted grades, permitted to do modified assignments, provided additional help and allowed extra time. The basic issue seems to be: Did the student achieve as much as he or she could, given his or her learning disability? The assumption is that students who have not made an effort have not achieved their potential; and a regular teacher is not likely to adjust his or her standards for that student. There are, of course, a few teachers like Tim Michael's driver's education teacher who hold to the rule that standards must be standards even for students who are making every effort. It is unfortunate that these teachers sometimes are the only ones with whom an LD student can take some regular courses.

The instructional goals and objectives for self-contained classes are established with reference to the curriculum guides for the corresponding regular courses. As one self-contained science teacher stated: "We try to follow the County curriculum guides for the subject, but of course we have to present the material in a way in which these students can understand." There is relatively little individualization of the instructional goals and objectives for different students in the class unless the class is using some individually programmed material. What individualization exists is accomplished by grouping the students into the self-contained classes by achievement level, although this happens only in English and math.

The instructional goals and objectives of the resource classes are totally individualized. Some students such as Jock Fine and Dick Bison work on specific deficiencies. Other students such as Deeter Schuman and Peter Lazer use the resource class as a means of support to compensate for the problems they have in regular classes because of their learning disabilities.

Closely related to the establishment of course goals and objectives is establishing the student performance criteria for successful completion of the goals and objectives set for each course. At the high school level, the typical indication of a student's success in attaining the goals and objectives of a particular course by his or her grades. Grades are determined by some weighted combination of class behavior and participation, completion of daily assignments, quizzes and tests. Teachers, both regular and special, are very open and clear about how they grade, and all of the STP students knew exactly what would be required to obtain a particular grade level. In the regular class, the evaluation procedures are applied with only minor modification to the learning disabled student, and only if the LD student demonstrates that it is his or her learning disability rather than his or her lack of motivation, persistence and effort that is causing difficulty. For the self-contained class, the evaluation procedures are established for a group or class of LD students, not for each individual LD student. Only in the resource class are the performance criteria completely individualized.

- Personnel and Procedures Available for LD Student Program Planning

The previous sections have defined several aspects of program planning decisions. For secondary students, the major responsibility for planning at least the regular portion of the student's educational program rests with the guidance counselor, but the student's teachers also have an important role in the planning process. The guidance counselor: discusses career, college, and/or other post-high school education opportunities with students; assists in the selection of courses for the following year; negotiates course, class and teacher changes; and mediates disputes about grades (usually without success). Regular and special teachers advise students about careers colleges, and appropriate courses. In conjunction with school and department directives; teachers establish goals, objectives and grading standards and apply those standards to individual students. Students are encouraged to take or discouraged from taking certain courses by their teachers, and teachers are open about describing their classes and other classes in their departments, so that students can make an informed choice.

The relationship between the planning responsibilities of the guidance counselor and those of the special education staff differed in the two high schools in the STP study. At O'Brian, the LD self-contained students are counseled, their schedules made and changed, and their difficulties with regular teachers adjusted by the director of the LD self-contained program. The guidance counselors have little to do with the educational planning for these students, although technically they retain that responsibility. For the resource students at both high schools and for the self-contained students at West Forest, the guidance counselors are responsible for all course selections and changes. The special education teachers under this system are informal advisors.

Special education teachers may offer suggestions in the area of career planning and continuing education, based on their knowledge of the student's disability. They may be good sources of information about special college programs of which guidance counselors may not be aware. For example, one resource teacher recently visited a nearby private college that emphasizes a strong support program for LD students. Now this teacher is able to provide information on the benefits of that type of program for the LD student. In the area of course selection, the LD teachers talk with the students individually and may even talk with the students' parents about specific course selection problems. The LD teacher provides advice on appropriate courses for an LD student. For example, Tim Michael was discouraged by the LD teacher from taking consumer chemistry because he had poor math skills. Deeter Schuman's mother questioned his resource teacher during the IEP conference about whether it was advisable for him to take a foreign language, and the resource teacher advised against it. At West Forest, the LD self-contained teachers hosted an evening meeting at which they explained the courses available and then talked with each parent individually about his or her child's schedule. The one STP parent who attended found this very helpful.

The impact of the LD teacher's recommendation depends, in large part, on his or her persuasiveness and reputation. The senior resource teacher at O'Brian has been there for several years and knows most of the teachers and courses, and her recommendations are usually sought out and followed. On the other hand, resource teachers at West Forest have not been teaching in that school long, and their influence is notably weaker. But no matter how influential an LD teacher may be, his or her input is only advisory. LD teachers tell incredible "war stories" of LD students being placed in advanced classes in which they were "doomed to fail" because a guidance counselor gave inappropriate counselling during the course selection process. Although the guidance counselor is the person authorized to make teacher or course changes, the special education teachers are important mediators in this process. The LD teachers will advocate for a student who wishes to make a teacher change or other changes in schedule.

In addition to advising LD students on course selection and assisting in making course changes, the LD teachers are play an extremely important role at the level in the planning process where the regular program curriculum goals and objectives are applied to the LD student. The resource teachers often serve as a communication link and advocate with the regular teachers for the LD students they instruct. The resource teachers perform two functions. First, they find out first-hand exactly what the regular teacher expects from students and then tries to be certain that the LD student understands and complies with those expectations. The resource teachers constantly check with their students about their work in other classes, asking questions such as:

> Isn't the outline on your research paper due tomorrow?
>
> Is it done?
>
> Do you need help thinking out your approach or organizing your ideas?
>
> Should I help you proofread it?
>
> Should we check your grammar and punctuation?
>
> Have you included all your references?

Second, resource teachers convey to regular teachers information on the student's disability: "Jock has trouble understanding written directions. Try to explain the instructions orally for him." In certain circumstances, the resource teachers are able to administer oral versions of the regular class tests and to convince a teacher to pass rather than fail a student who did as well as could be expected given the student's learning disability.

The coordination and support role played by the resource teacher is difficult. It takes time to arrange opportunities to meet with regular teachers whose free periods are at different times. Interaction is often crisis generated, occurring when a student feels he or she doesn't understand something and there is a test on it the next day. It requires judgment, since in some instances the student's problem in a regular class is not his or her learning disability per se but a motivational or attention problem that may or may not be attributable to the learning disability. When an LD student is having problems in his or her regular courses, the regular teacher almost always asks, "Don't you think the student could do better if he or she tried?" Because not all LD students have the total devotion to the task that some regular teachers expect, it is sometimes difficult to explain: (1) that the student's poor class behavior and work habits are related to his or her learning disability; or (2) that although the student might have exerted extra effort, it is not really fair to always expect an LD student to do extensive extra work just to keep pace. Motivation and effort can compensate for a learning disability. But how fair is it to expect an LD student to exhibit exemplary efforts in these areas?

- The Role of the IEP Document and Conference

Having discussed the educational planning process and the personnel and procedures available for program planning, we turn now to the question of what role in that process the IEP document and conference should play. In Exhibit 6, we present schematically the elements of the planning process and indicate where the IEP document and conference fit into that process.

As indicated in Exhibit 6, only a small portion of the decisions involved in the planning process are part of the IEP document, although almost all are topics of discussion at the IEP conference. Among the planning decisions presented, the IEP document is required to include only the annual goals and short-term objectives that are specific to the individual student and the specific modifications required in the student's regular program to accommodate his or her unique needs. Although Custis County IEPs include a description of general curriculum goals and objectives being used with all students in the self-contained class, this is not required. Nor is the IEP document required to address other areas of importance to the planning process. Particularly, the IEP document does not address long-range directions -- there is no indication on the IEP document that any discussion was held, or tentative decision reached, or direction established related to career choice or college plans. These questions arise at the IEP meeting and must be addressed in making course selections, yet the IEP document is not required to include the information.

The IEP document does not contain any reference the student's mainstreamed courses except perhaps to list them and indicate the percentage of time to be spent in the regular program. Here again, course selection and change make up an important topic for discussion at the IEP meeting, yet the IEP does not document this discussion. Of course, unless the guidance counselor is present at the IEP conference, the course selection discussion

Exhibit 6

The Relationship of the IEP to the Planning Process

Decision in the Planning Process	IEP Document	IEP Conference
Career choice and/or post-high school education school education	Not Required	Discussed
Academic foundation vis-a-vis vocational preparation	Not required	Discussed
Selection of courses, classes and teachers	Not required	Discussed
Establishment of curriculum and instructional goals	Not required but curriculum goals and objectives for self-contained classes are on STP students' IEPs	Discussed
Evaluation procedure to determine attainment of instructional goals and objectives	Not required but evaluation procedures for self-contained students are on the STP students' IEPs	Discussed
Adaptation of goals, objectives and grading policies to meet needs of the individual LD student	Required	Discussed and developed at the conference
Specific learning deficiency skill development goals and objectives and evaluation criteria to meet LD student's unique needs.	Required	Discussed and developed at the conference

is only advisory, since the responsibility for course selection decision rests with the guidance counselor.

Although the student's current problems with specific regular teachers and classes may be discussed at the IEP conference, any requests for teacher changes or special intervention may require another meeting with the teacher and/or guidance counselor. The IEP meeting is not a session at which decisions are made or action takes place regarding the student's regular program, usually because the appropriate personnel are not present and the special education staff present are limited to an advisory or mediator role in these decisions.

The IEP content bears no relationship to the student's success in the class as measured by his or her grades. Certainly in the regular classes, if not in the special education classes, it is grades -- not IEP goals and objectives completed -- that determine whether a student has passed his or her courses and has earned the required credit units for graduation. The students, their parents and their teachers are very concerned about grades, and much discussion at the IEP meeting centers around "how well the student is doing," which is always answered in terms of grades.

The parents of the STP students are very concerned about their son or daughter's day-to-day progress and are willing to help in whatever way they can. This, too, is usually a topic of discussion at the IEP meeting but not recorded in the IEP document.

4.4 Implications of the IEP Provisions

4.4.1 Implications for Policy Makers

- Comprehensive Planning Process

We recognize that the IEP document is intended to set forth in writing what the student's unique special learning needs are and what particular special education services or program modifications are required to meet those needs. It states specific goals and objectives to be achieved by the provision of special education and related services, and provides a means for recording the extent of the student's progress toward meeting these goals and objectives. The IEP document is not a record of the student's total educational program; nor is it intended even to be a complete description of all aspects of the student's special education program.

The findings of the STP study, however, indicate that there is a need at the secondary level for a more long-term, integrated, comprehensive planning process. This planning process would include establishing long-range directions for each student; selecting appropriate courses and classes; adapting, if necessary, the curriculum content, instructional approach and grading policy of particular classes to meet the unique needs of the learning disabled student; and developing specific annual goals and short-term objectives to meet the student's unique special needs. One approach to meeting the need for an integrated, comprehensive planning process would be to expand the content of the IEP document; another would be to encourage the use of the IEP conference as an opportunity to discuss these concerns.

- IEP Conference

In addition to the use of the IEP conference as a mechanism for developing an integrated, comprehensive educational plan for secondary students, our findings related to other aspects of the IEP conference have policy implications.

Our findings suggest that some learning disabled students do not wish to be present when their teachers and parents review their work. They want to know what their teachers say, but not to be there when it is said. A much more satisfactory arrangement for these students is for the special education teacher or program director to discuss the IEP with the student first, incorporating all his or her comments and concerns, and then to review the IEP with the parents separately. This permits both the student and the parents to feel free to express their concerns, and for the teacher to be open and frank in discussing the student's school progress and problems with both the student and parents. This does not mean that students should not be encouraged to attend their IEP meetings; rather, it suggests that opportunity for individual conversations should be offered instead of, or in addition to, the more formal parent/student/teacher/school representative IEP meeting.

- IEP Document

The IEPs of the STP students illustrate certain areas where policy clarification may be desirable. We found one important use of the IEP, particularly for mainstreamed LD students, to be to buttress the communication with regular class teachers. For this purpose to be achieved, it is important for the IEP document to state clearly and specifically the adaptations to enable the student to be instructed in a regular class. This should relate to the student's level of functioning and should include a description of the support available to regular teachers from his or her special education teachers and other special education program staff. The IEP regulations do not state this as a required content item, and local education agencies may need encouragement to revise their IEP forms so this item is included.

The goals and objectives included on the IEPs for the STP students tended to be general curriculum content goals and objectives rather than goals and objectives related to specific academic skill development or deficiency remediation. The relationship between the IEP goals and objectives for a self-contained student, and the general curriculum goals and objectives for the self-contained classes in which the student is placed, needs to be clarified so that self-contained class teachers understand that the IEP need not state general curriculum goals.

Both teachers and parents feel that while knowing the major goals for a student is important, the specification of short-term objectives is of little benefit unless the IEP indicates of whether and when the particular objective was achieved. The IEP document should be required to contain this information.

Because the IEP document is intended to reflect the extent of progress the student is making toward achieving his or her educational goals, greater emphasis should be placed on developing IEPs so as to facilitate meaningful comparisons from year-to-year. Statements of levels of performance and the specification of goals and objectives should be linked to each other so that a cumulative record of progress and accomplishment is created.

4.4.2 Implications for Program Administrators

- IEP Conference

The STP students did not, as a rule, wish to attend the IEP conference held with their parents. Therefore, the LD teachers or program directors responsible for preparing IEP recommendations for presentation to parents at the IEP meeting should discuss the IEP with the student and elicit input prior to the meeting. Students should still be encouraged to attend the IEP meeting, but other options for their participation should also be available.

For many parents, the IEP conference has evolved into a general program planning meeting, the topics discussed venturing far and wide from the special education goals, objectives and services -- to career or college plans, course selection, changes in current teachers or courses, particular courses where the student is vulnerable and what can be done to reduce the likelihood of a D or failing grade, actions or activities needed or possible at home, and parent education on potential and impending problems such as dating, drinking, driving, drugs, and disruption. The nature of the discussion at the IEP meeting should be encouraged to expand to cover all areas of teacher, parent and student concern, and not be limited to the content of the IEP document.

For many of the areas discussed at the IEP conference, the presence and participation of the student's guidance counselor should be encouraged. Because many of the educational plans, decisions and problems of an LD student are related to the areas of knowledge, expertise or responsibility of both the special education teacher and the guidance counselor, a close working relationship between the student's guidance counselor and his or her special education teachers should be developed. This relationship might be formally established by having guidance counselor participation and sign-off in the development of the student's IEP and by having special education program participation and sign-off on the LD student's schedule of courses and any course changes.

- IEP Document

Although not required by P.L. 94-142, the IEP document currently being developed for LD secondary students could with very little additional content be expanded to more useful, comprehensive record of the student's educational program. A comprehensive document would include the following items:

-- First, a statement of long-term directions. This statement, which would be revised each year, would consider current expectations regarding career or college plans, and indicate a general focus of academic, vocational or social development. As part of establishing long-term directives the IEP could include a statement of the student's total high school program plan, including courses and credits required for graduation or courses needed for particular job entry or post-high school training. Thus, the total program plan would show what courses the student must take, should take, and hopes to take. Progress toward completing the total program plan would be reviewed each year. Guidance counselors may already do this form of total program planning with students; if so, the plan should be reviewed with the student and parent in conjunction with the student's IEP to show how his or her special education program fits into the total education plan.

-- Second, a statement of the modifications required in the substantive curriculum, instructional strategies and perhaps grading practices to accommodate the learning disabled student in his or her regular classes including physical and vocational education.

-- Third, a statement of the specific individual goals and objectives that are to be the primary focus of the special education program. For the self-contained students, these goals and objectives would probably cut across academic subject areas and serve to link all the self-contained teachers together in a common effort related to two or three priority areas for the student.

-- Fourth, a statement of the supportive services available to assist the LD student in his or her regular classes. These may be such services as interpreting the regular class written materials so that the LD student can understand and assimilate the content.

-- Fifth, a statement of parent and student actions to be taken in support of the IEP goals and objectives. This includes activities the parents and the student expect to undertake to facilitate the school's efforts to help the student achieve the specified goals and objectives. If the IEP is reviewed and signed by the student, his or her own serious commitment to certain behavior should be reinforced by recording it in a formal document.

-- Sixth, a statement of the student's current level of performance that permits examination of the continuity of progress. A major limitation of the IEP document is not its content but the lack of any requirement that there be continuity of that content. A student, parent, or teacher should be able to place the IEPs of successive years together and get a sense of the progress the student has made both in terms of improvement in the level of performance and in terms of the extent and variety of goals and objectives mastered. The IEPs of previous years do not seem to build such a cumulative record; therefore, some mechanism for showing continuity should be provided.

4.4.3 Implications for Teachers

Preparation of the IEP

Although in earlier sections of this report we recommended adding material to the IEP, there are some things that might make the preparation of the IEP easier. First, teachers should read the student's previous IEP and use some of the same terms and yardsticks to determine the student's current level of performance. This would provide continuity to the IEP and enable the parents and students to follow the student's progress.

Second, teachers should make a clear statement about what adaptations the student may need to succeed in the regular class and what special education is available to support the regular or vocational program. In this connection, it is important to document any conversations the resource or self-contained teacher may have already had with the student's regular or vocational teachers about modifications needed and support offered.

Third, teachers should think about the total plan for the student's program from the most general to the most specific. At the most general level should be a consideration of the student's total high school experience and the general direction he or she wishes to pursue.

Fourth, teachers should develop recommendations for specific individual student goals and objectives. For resource students, there should be at least (perhaps at most) two year-long goals: 1) the student will acquire the organizational and study skills needed to succeed in his or her regular classes; and 2) the student will increase his or her level of skill in some specified skill or content area.

For the first goal, short-term objectives can be stated in terms of the skills the student needs to develop in order to succeed, for example:

- Organize his or her time and develop techniques to plan ahead and schedule work so homework assignments are completed on time;
- Maintain a complete and orderly notebook;
- Be able to read assignments and understand what is required;
- Be able to read assigned material and take notes;

- Be able to proofread written work and make corrections;
- Know how to use a dictionary or calculator to verify spelling or calculations.

The second goal defines and provides short-term objectives for the student to work on if there is no regular class work that needs attention or support -- e.g., lists of spelling words, grammar, reading comprehension, writing exercises, mathematics problems.

The resource teachers of the STP students generally spent about one-half to three-quarters of their resource class instruction time providing some form of support for the student's regular class program. For many students, this was the only instruction provided; for a few, the entire resource class was spent working on a basic skill area -- mathematics or spelling. Rarely did a resource teacher attempt to work on more than one content skill area, and almost always regular program support took priority over the content skill area.

The goals and objectives for the self-contained students should be based on their particular learning needs and will typically cut across subject areas. They may be behavioral skills (e.g., attend class, increase attention, reduce distractability and disruption), or they may be academic skills (e.g., improve reading, writing, spelling). The goals and objectives should unify the self-contained teachers in their efforts to address a particular fundamental learning problem. When the teachers, parents and students are all aware that this is the target goal for the year, concentrated effort in every class will be directed toward developing that skill.

There is no need to describe the general curriculum goals and objectives in the various subject area self-contained classes which are applicable to all students in these classes -- unless specific modifications are being made in that curriculum for a particular student. A reference to the general curriculum outline is sufficient documentation. For example: "Sam Jones will receive instruction in biology, world history and consumer math in self-contained classes; the instruction in these classes is based on the curriculum guide developed for these subjects by Custis County."

• IEP Conference

The IEP conference is perceived very positively by parents, but it would be even more valuable if there were continuity from year to year. Teachers should begin the IEP meeting by reviewing last year's IEP, showing the changes in level of performance, improvement and increased skills. The review of previous goals and objectives should be from the perspective of both skills development and knowledge expansion.

If the IEP conference is to serve as a mechanism for the discussion of the student's total education program, then the next activity would be to review the student's long-range directions. For example, does the student still expect to attend college? Work on construction? Any further thoughts on which college? Other jobs? Is it time to rethink some of these expectations? The next step would be to consider the student's total high school program and how the special education program is integrated with and supports that program. The teacher should then discuss the student's current work, the goals and objectives of the subject areas being taught or the skill areas being worked on, and the student's grades. Parents and students should be encouraged to offer suggestions on what can be done to improve the student's current grades.

Next, teachers should discuss any current or potential problem areas and approaches the teacher, student and parents might take to prevent or alleviate these problems. Written reports from other teachers are helpful here, especially if the student is having difficulty in a particular class.

After reviewing the past, and discussing the present, it is appropriate to introduce the future by considering the goals and objectives to be pursued during the coming year. This is also a good opportunity to discuss the student's proposed course schedule for the following year and the modifications and supportive arrangements that will be required to accommodate the student in those classes.

4.4.4 Implications for Parents

• Use of the IEP Conference and Document

Parents should use the IEP document and conference as a means of learning more about their child, the progress he or she is making, and the skills and knowledge he or she is acquiring. Parents should help develop the content of the IEP document. The content of the IEP should not limit parent questions but should offer a means for going beyond the IEP to other aspects of the student's total education program.

First, parents should make every effort to attend the conference. If they cannot, they should talk with school staff over the phone. Second, parents should prepare for the IEP conference. They should review their child's previous year's IEP, his or her recent report cards and other records; in addition, they should make a list of questions related to current problems the child is having. They should confer with their child beforehand to discuss the general areas of career choice, college plans, and what classes or courses he or she expects to take the following year.

Parents should be involved in the development of the IEP but not feel limited by its content. Questions about appropriate colleges, grades, and homework are all relevant. The IEP conference is a form of parent education. Parents should be sure they understand how the new IEP builds on the old one -- how to determine their child's progress from successive IEPs, and what the relationship is between this and last year's goals and objectives. They should learn all they can about their child's class activities, what he or she learns, how he or she behaves, and what grades he or she will probably receive.

Since the IEP document is not designed to communicate all the information parents should know, nor does it cover all the areas parents may wish to discuss, parents should not rely on the IEP document itself. However, they should be sure the IEP reflects their particular concerns for their child, even if these concerns do not seem to fit neatly into the IEP format.

4.4.5 Implications for Students

- Involvement

Learning disabled students should be actively involved in the preparation of their IEPs, although not necessarily by attending the IEP conference. The LD students should be encouraged to set their own goals and objectives, to select their own courses, and to determine -- within limits -- how their special education instructional time will be spent. They should know what progress they have made from one year to the next, and what goals and objectives their teachers have recommended as priorities for them. The

LD students should understand that their IEP indicates what modifications may need to be made in their regular classes to accommodate their learning disability, and what to do if these modifications are not made.

Learning disabled secondary students should contribute to the content of the IEP document, agree to it, and even sign it. The students should be asked to think about whether they wish to remain in the LD program and, if so, what sort of help they expect to receive. All of the STP students knew why they were in the LD program and had some understanding of its benefits. Whether the benefits are worth the stigma many students clearly seem feel is a question that should be posed to each LD student every year.

In our study, the STP students were responsible for choosing their courses for the following year. Their parents had to "sign off" on their choices, and the guidance counselor had to review and approve their program, but the initial preferences and final selection were student determined. In this process, the students received advice and assistance from their friends, teachers, parents and guidance counselors; they generally made good decisions. Thus, we think LD students should be encouraged to make course selection decisions subject to review by their parents, guidance counselor and, preferably, their resource teacher or self-contained program director. Furthermore, the IEP conference is an excellent time for LD students to discuss their course selection for the following year with their special education teachers.

The STP resource students were generally responsible for how they used their time in the resource class. Some students viewed the class as a guided study period, and others as a time when they studied a particular subject or skill. Still, the particular focus activity was initiated by the student. We thought this to be appropriate; the LD students generally knew which academic courses were causing them trouble and requested and used the resource teacher's assistance productively. Since the LD resource student makes the decisions about how the resource time will be spent, these decisions should be reflected in the IEP. Similarly, the self-contained students should participate in discussions about the general skill development target areas included in their IEPs.

In sum, an LD student should be aware of the progress made since his or her last IEP, and he or she should participate in certain decisions -- particularly whether to remain in the LD program, what general future directions should be pursued, what courses should be taken, how to use the resource class time, and what particular learning or academic skill will be the focus of their special education program. They should know what information, if any, the LD teachers have conveyed about their learning problems to their regular teachers.

5.0 IMPACT OF LEAST RESTRICTIVE ENVIRONMENT (LRE) PROVISIONS

The STP study deliberately selected students in two different placement situations in order to facilitate assessment of the implementation and impact of the least restrictive environment (LRE). In this section, we describe the least restrictive environment provisions and how they are implemented in the two high schools involved in the study. We also discuss the various types of classes that form the total educational program of the LD student and the impact these classes have on different types of LD students. Finally, we offer some comments and suggestions related to the placement of students in the least restrictive environment.

5.1 The Least Restrictive Environment Provision of P.L. 94-142

P.L. 94-142 requires that: (1) to the maximum extent appropriate handicapped students are to be educated with students who are not handicapped; and (2) placement in special classes should occur only when the nature and severity of the student's handicap is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily.

School districts are required to provide a continuum of alternative placements, including instruction in regular classes and special classes, and to provide supplementary services such as a resource class in conjunction with regular class placement. A handicapped student's special education placement must be as close to the student's home as possible and, unless the student's IEP requires otherwise, in the school the student would normally have attended had he or she not been handicapped.

In this section, the following three important LRE requirements will be discussed. Placements should be:

- As close to the student's home as possible i.e., whether the placement is in the student's home-based school.
- Selected from a continuum of alternative placements that includes both instruction in regular classes supplemented by services in a resource class and instruction in special classes i.e., whether the placement is designated as a self-contained or resource program.

- To the maximum extent appropriate with students who are not handicapped i.e., what combination of special education, regular education and vocational education classes comprise the student's placement, and determine the degree of mainstreaming the student experiences.

5.2 Implementation of the Least Restrictive Environment Provisions

5.2.1 As Close to the Student's Home as Possible

Custis County offers LD resource classes at every high school, so LD students placed in resource classes attend their home-based schools. Self-contained classes are available only in certain designated high schools; therefore, many students in self-contained programs do not attend their home-based high school. Since the number of students being placed in LD self-contained programs is increasing, the school district has recently started a new LD self-contained program in a high school that previously had sent its students to either West Forest or O'Brian. This meant that several STP students were reassigned back to their home-based school.

5.2.2 Selection from a Continuum of Alternative Placements

For learning disabled secondary students living in those parts of the county where the STP students live, Custis County offers two basic special education placement alternatives: a self-contained placement and regular academic classes supplemented by resource class placement. Within these two placements or programs, there is flexibility in terms of the number and nature of the regular or vocational classes selected.

For practical purposes, placement in the resource program means students spend one class period a day in the resource class taking a subject called basic skills review; the remainder of their schedule consists of regular academic, non-academic and/or vocational classes. Placement in the self-contained program means students take most of their academic subjects in separate, self-contained special classes, but take all their non-academic and vocational subjects in regular classes. Each self-contained class period represents a unique academic subject; thus, a self-contained student will have separate, self-contained class periods of English, math, biology, and history. Each of these classes is taught by a learning disabilities teacher and contains only LD self-contained students.

Although co-existing in the same building, the resource and self-contained programs are administratively separate and use separate instructional staff. Changing an LD student's placement from the self-contained to the resource program involves a formal process and changes in teachers, thus, constraining the development of a complete continuum between the two placements and resulting in the following discontinuities:

-- A resource student cannot take a self-contained class even if there is no appropriate regular class in that subject available. The student may take that subject through the resource class, however, the way, Jock Fine is taking math.

-- A self-contained student may take a course called basic skills review, but with a self-contained teacher, not the resource teacher.

-- A self-contained student may take up to three regular classes; but taking more than that for any long period of time may force a formal placement change to the resource program and result in changes in teachers and increased mainstreaming.

5.2.3 To the Maximum Extent Appropriate with Students Who Are Not Handicapped

An LD student's total educational placement is defined by his or her schedule of classes. The classes that are the building blocks from which an LD student's placement is formed fall into 16 broad categories outlined in Exhibit 7 and discussed in detail in Appendix I. The categorization in Exhibit 7 is not intended to be a definitive listing; it is based on observations in only two high schools in one school district. Yet, what it points out very clearly is the tremendous variation in the types of classes available to learning disabled students in secondary schools. There may also be variation within types. For example, Type 10 -- vocational classes extending beyond one period offered in a vocational center, differ tremendously in the level of academic skills required. For example, carpentry involves somewhat less academic skill than air conditioning/refrigeration. Within any given type of class, there are factors that depend on the teacher, the teaching approach used, and the degree of conceptualization relative to practical application stressed. Deeter Schuman, a college-bound LD resource student, expressed this by saying: "I will do all right next year in the Algebra II/Trig class if I

Exhibit 7

Types of High School Classes

Regular Education Academic Classes:

1. Academic classes for honors students; advanced placement classes; classes for academically gifted and talented. No STP students were in classes of this type.
2. Regular academic classes for college-bound students (other than honors classes, advanced placement classes, classes designated and/or restricted to very high achieving or gifted students.) Deeter's biology and geometry classes are examples.
3. Regular academic classes for mixed or general students. Deeter's current affairs class, English and history classes, and Peter's and David's algebra classes are examples.
4. Regular academic classes for less advanced students, particularly in math which may be slower-paced, and less advanced than either Type 1 or 2 classes. Eddie's, Dick's, and Ted's algebra classes are examples.
5. Regular academic classes for academically unsuccessful students. The biology lab class taken by Vicky, Dick and others is an example.

Regular Education Nonacademic Classes:

6. Physical education, health and driver education (all part of the health and physical education department).
7. Music, dramatics and other classes that support extracurricular activities.

Vocational Education Classes:

8. Special interest, single subject classes such as accounting, electronics, and computer science.
9. Prevocational and vocational single period classes offered as part of a vocational program available in each high school, such as home economics, mechanical drawing, industrial arts, and typing.
10. Vocational classes extending beyond one period offered in a vocational center, such as carpentry, auto mechanics, and child development classes.
11. Job site vocational classes.
12. Work/study arrangements.

Special Education Classes:

13. Self-contained classes in various subject areas such as English, consumer math, and U.S. history.
14. Self-contained individual study or basic skill review classes (resource type classes for self-contained students).
15. Resource classes (called basic skill review).
16. Monitoring arrangements.

get a teacher who explains things carefully; that's why I hope I get Mrs. Jamison because I've had her for math before and she's good at explaining."*

By combining the various types of regular, vocational and special education classes, it is possible to create several different types and degrees of mainstreaming. Using the proportion of time in the regular class as the measure, the most mainstreamed student is the student who has been dismissed or withdrawn from special education. Dismissal occurs when the school, parent and student agree that the student no longer needs or requires special education services. Generally, dismissal occurs after a period in which the student has been in regular classes on a monitored basis, but outright dismissal may also occur. It is possible for the school to recommend a student's dismissal based on the results of the student's triennial evaluation showing that he or she no longer meets the discrepancy criteria. However, if either the student or parent disagrees with the recommendation, and if the student's teachers also disagree, the student may remain in the program. Deeter Schuman is in this position. His resource teacher, parents and Deeter himself think he should remain in the resource class for another year because, as his resource teacher remarked, "a student's junior year is most important if a student plans to go to college." Yet, Deeter's triennial indicated that he had "tested out" of the program. So far he is being permitted to take the resource class.

A student or parent may request that he or she be withdrawn from the LD program even though the school believes the student is still eligible for and needs special services. Placing a student on monitored status is a good compromise in these situations, but if a student and/or his or her parents are insistent, the student will be withdrawn. Ben Long, one STP student who withdrew, did so despite his teacher's and parents' recommendations. He simply could no longer tolerate the image of himself as an LD student and all the connotations he believed that image represented. Being monitored meant he had to retain the LD label, and he felt that it was not an acceptable compromise.

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*Note the problem this student faces; neither he nor his guidance counselor can arrange for him to have a specific teacher.

For students who are not dismissed or do not withdraw from the special education program, the most mainstreamed situation is being on *monitored status*. At the secondary level, this means the student has an IEP and a resource teacher assigned to monitor his or her work. The resource teacher contacts the student's regular teachers periodically to determine how the student is doing and whether he or she needs extra help. Although the student has no scheduled class time in a resource class, he or she may arrange to obtain the assistance of the resource teacher after school or during lunch. The monitored student may also arrange for a regular teacher to "write a pass" that allows the student to go to the resource class for assistance for particular problems -- e.g., to get assistance in organizing and sequencing thoughts for an upcoming research paper assignment. After a successful year on a monitored basis, the student is usually dismissed from the special education program.

One important aspect of being a monitored (rather than dismissed or withdrawn) student is that if an LD student's academic program requires additional support, the student can be returned to a resource class with a minimum of formality. The student merely arranges to drop an academic course, usually the one causing the most problem, and elects a resource class instead. Dick Bison was in that position last fall; he selected a more rigorous academic program than he could handle and after the first quarter dropped his German class, changed English classes, and began going to the resource class.

There are serious practical problems with being a monitored student. There is no set time period for obtaining resource teacher support. The monitored student and resource teacher must arrange that together, and often these arrangements are difficult to negotiate. Students and teachers are reluctant to give up before- or after-school time, and regular teachers are not always cooperative about giving passes. The resource teacher may feel burdened with having to maintain contact with the monitored student's teachers, especially when the resource teacher is able to interact with the monitored student too infrequently to provide effective assistance.

In terms of time spent in regular classes, the *resource* students are all equally mainstreamed. They all have one daily period out of six in the resource or basic skills review class. There is a vast qualitative difference, however, between a student like Deeter Schuman whose regular academic classes are all academic classes for college-bound or general students (Types 2 and 3), and students like Dick Bison whose regular academic classes consist of classes for general students, slower-paced classes, and classes for the academically unsuccessful students (Types 3, 4 and 5). Students who combine the resource class with a vocational program also have a qualitatively different program from that of those who combine the resource class with regular academic courses.

The self-contained students vary in the number of non-special education classes in which they are enrolled. It is possible for an LD self-contained student to have only one or two periods in special education classes. Bill Smith, for example, had three periods of carpentry and physical education with students who were not handicapped; his only class with other LD students was English. Eddie Lawrence had an algebra class (Type 4), physical education, and mechanical drawing with nonhandicapped students, and English, earth science and world history as LD self-contained classes. Vicky Mallack had physical education, typing and biology (Type 5) with nonhandicapped students. Since homeroom and lunch period are spent with nonhandicapped students, these students, although self-contained, are mainstreamed more than half the school day in terms of time.

There are self-contained students who are not mainstreamed at all. Sally Benson had only one class, physical education, with nonhandicapped students; and in that class Sally has psychologically segregated herself by frequently cutting class and refusing to "dress out."

5.3 Impact of the Least Restrictive Environment Provisions

In the previous sections we discussed three aspects of the least restrictive environment that are specified by the law. A fourth aspect of the student's placement that should be considered when describing the impact of the least restrictive environment provisions is the educational environment that is present in the various types of classes the LD students attend.

In describing the classes attended by LD students, we have focused on the following dimensions:

- Administrative contact -- how much contact occurs between that class and the teacher of the regular (or special class) teachers;
- Physical location -- how isolated the class is from the the rest of the school and the student's home neighborhood;
- Participant composition -- how many students are in the class, what is the ratio of LD students to non-LD students;
- Social climate -- how much structure, order and discipline exists, how much physical movement and communication occurs;
- Instructional conditions -- how great is the work orientation of the class, the level of attention required of the students in the class, the degree of class participation, the academic or cognitive demands made on the students.

We observed STP students in many of the 16 types of classes outlined in Exhibit 7 and talked with the teachers of these classes. In Appendix I, we describe the classes we observed based on the environmental dimensions presented above.

Some of the 16 types of classes we did not study thoroughly. We had no STP student in an academic class for honors students (Type 1) or in jobsite or work/study arrangements. Some situations in which we had students we did not investigate -- e.g., physical education (Type 6), chorus (Type 7), accounting and electronics (Type 8), self-contained individual study or basic skill review (Type 14), and monitoring arrangements (Type 16).

5.3.1 As Close to the Student's Home as Possible

One theme we pursued with the STP students in self-contained programs was how they felt about attending (or not attending) their home-based school. A few students liked attending a school other than their home-based school because no one knew or could tell they were going to a special program, and they could get away from friends who had been a bad influence. But most students did not like it because they were away from their neighborhood friends.

Other students felt that if a student had to go to a school other than his or her home-based school their friends would think this was because the student was "stupid" or "bad." However, once the self-contained students got established and comfortable in the LD program in another school, many students resented being "jerked around" when they were reassigned back to their home-based school.

When a new self-contained program opened in another high school, several of the STP students were reassigned to that program. Stuart Warren was overjoyed to be going back to his home-based school; Wally Quinn and Anne Tupper were upset but accepted it; Sally Benson absolutely refused to change and has obtained rides to O'Brian High School from her boyfriend. Wally accepted the change only because the new high school was two blocks from home. But he was devastated by having to adjust to a new situation and would have chosen to stay at his old high school if he had been offered a choice. Both the students and parents involved in the reassignment commented on how little had been done to prepare the students for the change and ease their way into the program at the new high school.

Custis County is experimenting with a school-based continuum of services model that assures a full range of LD placement alternatives is available in each high school. This program would eliminate the need for students who require the intensive instruction of the self-contained programs to leave their home-based school. However, for those LD students who wish to go to a different school and for whom there is good reason for removal from a negative environment, placement in the LD self-contained program in a neighboring high school should be administratively feasible.

5.3.2 Selected from a Continuum of Alternative Placements

As part of determining the impact of the P.L. 94-142 requirements, we have attempted to describe the educational environment and experiences presented by the two principal alternative placements for LD secondary students -- self-contained and resource classes -- and the ease of movement from one placement to another.

The self-contained classes in which the STP students were placed follow the regular secondary academic program model of one class for each subject area. Thus, there were LD self-contained classes in English, math, social studies and, in one of the high schools, science. The curriculum in these classes is both remedial and compensatory. The curriculum goals and objectives are derived from the curriculum of the regular program but with different learning materials, instruction sequencing and pacing, and teaching strategies. Classes are small and informal. There is relatively little individual instruction but much attention to the individual student. Maintaining order, structure and control is important and often difficult.

Almost all the STP parents expressed satisfaction with their child's self-contained placements. The students and parents alike value the small classes, individual attention, slower pace and less demanding materials associated with self-contained classes. There are several STP students who say they would drop out of school were it not for the self-contained program. Regular academic classes, even with resource class support, are not considered viable alternatives.

The STP students in the self-contained program all recognized they had serious learning problems. Some accepted this fact with grace; some were self-deprecating. All the self-contained students recognized that their program carried with it a stigma; but most were able to take it in their stride, discount criticizers as uninformed ("what do they know about it?"), or disregard the stigma as insignificant ("so what, if being in the program helps me"). Although the STP self-contained students perceived a stigma associated with their program, they did not perceive a stigma directed toward them personally, and all accepted the program -- despite the stigma -- as their salvation from the failure, pressure, frustration and exposure experienced in the regular class.

Placement in the self-contained program has implications for the LD self-contained student's friendship patterns. For some students, perhaps more at O'Brian where all the LD self-contained classes are located in the same hall, a close social network has developed among some students. While this has its disadvantages when attempting to maintain class discipline, it also provides some students without friends with a new social outlet. On the other hand, LD students in self-contained programs have limited opportunities to meet students outside the LD program. Since there are proportionally fewer girls in the self-contained learning disabilities program, LD students' social contacts with girls are particularly constrained.

For the STP students with severe learning disabilities, the self-contained class provides an instructional environment in which the students are not totally overwhelmed, seriously pressured, completely frustrated, utterly unsuccessful, and genuinely unhappy. Instead, these students are able to do most of the basic work, gain self-assurance and self-esteem, and take pride in their accomplishments. Even the LD students whose learning disabilities are less severe appreciate the self-contained class environment where they are comfortable, know what to expect, and are able to master the material without great struggle.

The LD self-contained students who are reasonably attentive, participate in class and do the assigned work, are able to acquire new knowledge, learn new ideas and concepts, and improve their verbal fluency. Even the students who are less involved make some progress, receive passing grades, and earn credits toward graduation. And passing grades, even if based on a different standard, are appreciated by the LD students as a symbol that they are not losers or failures, and have worth as persons.

Although all the LD self-contained students acquired new knowledge from the instruction in their self-contained classes, they did not seem to improve their reading or other basic skills. This may be in part because there is no systematic remedial or developmental instruction in basic skills. One high school has initiated an experimental reading program that may eventually prove to be effective in improving student reading and writing.

For many LD self-contained students, perhaps more for those who are not highly motivated, the self-contained classes are the only reason they remain in school. They have made friends in the LD program, they feel protected, the academic pressure is tolerable, and consequently they enjoy school. Given that each year in school increases their knowledge, perhaps improves their skills and allows them time to prepare and plan for a post-high school future, the holding power of the self-contained class is of benefit.

The educational environment and experiences available in resource classes are described in Appendix I. Resource teachers generally have two objectives with regard to the instruction of the LD students: first to serve as a support to the regular academic program, and second to develop the basic skills that appear to be the student's major learning weakness. A third important aspect of the resource program is the role the resource teacher plays as mediator or advocate for the LD student vis-a-vis his or her regular teachers.

The LD resource students and their parents view the resource class instruction as moderately effective in developing their skills and providing assistance with their regular classwork. But resource students, more than the self-contained students, resent having to be associated with special education and the learning disabilities label. The students in self-contained programs acknowledge that they have serious learning difficulties and that they need intensive academic help, even though this means separate classes and perhaps some stigma. The resource students view themselves as basically academically competent and are less willing to accept the learning disabilities label for assistance that has no guarantees.

The resource students in our study have no social problems associated with their learning disability, their LD label, or their resource class placement. They are articulate and at ease in conversation, and they are socially mature. Almost their entire school day is spent in regular classes, and they think of themselves as regular students.

The effectiveness of the resource class instruction depends in large part on the LD student's own initiative. The student is the person who must determine what regular classes are causing him or her the most difficulty and what particular resource class assistance he or she would find most useful. Those students who thought their resource class very helpful took advantage of the assistance of the resource teacher, using the resource class as an opportunity to develop basic skills in an area in which they were weak or as an opportunity to get some assistance with difficult or confusing regular class assignments.

Those LD students who came to their resource classes with nothing to study or work on, no idea of the assistance they needed or the areas causing them problems, and an unwillingness to work on teacher-initiated skill development activities, consequently made little progress and felt they derived little benefit from the resource class. To the extent that the student or parent viewed the resource class as a form of tutoring for students doing poorly in regular classes, the students, parent and resource teacher were apt to be disappointed and frustrated. This is because the resource teachers are not able, nor should they be expected, to provide instruction in the substantive content of their LD students' regular courses.

Movement between the resource and self-contained placements occurs relatively infrequently because the teachers in the two programs are different and because there is a rather large conceptual gulf between the two programs. Self-contained students do not want to relinquish the stability and protection available in their self-contained classes any more than necessary, and definitely not in academic subjects. Resource students refuse to share the self-contained students' reputations which, whether deserving or not, are not positively perceived. Although it is extremely difficult administratively for a resource student to reduce his or her mainstreamed classes by attending the resource class two periods each day, it is relatively easy for a self-contained student to increase or decrease his or her mainstreamed classes. In fact, self-contained students who are in vocational programs may have only one or two special education classes a day.

Because the resource and self-contained programs have evolved as separate administrative systems, the change from the resource to self-contained category or the reverse may involve a different set of teachers and a different administrative contact person.

In sum, there are both self-contained and resource placements available to the LD students. They appear to meet distinctly different learning needs and levels of disability, to offer different instructional content and approaches, and to be relatively separate administratively, with the result that student movement from one placement to another is infrequent.

5.3.3 To the Maximum Extent Appropriate with Students Who Are Not Handicapped

As we studied the STP students, one ever-present question was what happens to these students, socially -- psychologically and academically -- when they are placed in regular classes. It is clear that the answer to that question depends in large part on the student, and particularly on his or her ability level and motivation. By ability level we mean the degree of severity of the student's learning disability, and by motivation we mean a constellation of behavior such as paying attention in class, completing or attempting to complete homework assignments and asking for help when necessary. The teachers of the STP students tended to describe this motivation concept as "trying hard," "being conscientious," "wanting to succeed," and "having a good attitude," and there was general agreement about which students were or were not "motivated." The two-by-three matrix of ability x motivation in Exhibit 8 categorizes the STP students.

Very few of the low ability STP students were placed in regular academic classes and those who were, were placed in classes for academically unsuccessful students (Vicky and Tim). These two students are both hard-working and motivated, and in the slower-paced classes these students did well; even better than some of their non-LD counterparts who were less motivated. It would seem that these "halfway" courses offer a reasonable alternative to self-contained classes, at least for the motivated student. There is an important caution, however -- many of the slower-paced regular academic classes for the "academically unsuccessful" are designed for and include large numbers of social and academic misfits and discipline problems. Vicky and Tim are not discipline problems, and it would be a great disservice to place them in a class with students whose reason for nonachievement was disciplinary rather than learning disability-related.

All of the low ability STP students were in regular vocational classes, either at the high school or at the vocational center, and in regular PE classes; Wally was in chorus. Two of the low ability STP students attended vocational classes which were difficult for them and in which they consequently lost interest. Anne, for example, found home economics to be difficult. She cut many classes, spent the time in class sitting in another area of the large classroom chatting with a friend, and learned virtually nothing. Julian believed he was a good artist. He drew pictures well and his family had praised his artistic talent, but he had difficulty in the art course because he couldn't copy well; this was a difficult failure for him to cope with. He gave up trying to do well in art and felt devasted by his failure in the school situation to do something he thought he had the ability to do.

The low ability LD students who are willing to make a sincere, conscientious, and continued effort do succeed in their vocational classes,

Exhibit 8

STP Students in Ability and Motivation Categories

Ability	Motivation	
	High	Low
High	Deeter (R)	Peter (R) David (R)
Moderate	Ben (R) Jock (R) Dick (R) Eddie (SC)	Ted (R)
Low	Vicky (SC) Stuart (SC) Time (SC) Wally (SC)	Bill (SC) Sally (SC) Julian (SC) Anne (SC)

although this success may be accompanied by some agonizing periods. Certainly a student like Vicky, who becomes physically sick with the pressure she perceives to exist in a regular class, is a vivid example of this. Success in regular vocational classes, whether defined as passing the course or as learning some new skill or competency, comes with a rather high price: exposure to other students and to a teacher who may not understand or be sensitive to your problems, and pressure to work hard to meet even the minimum demands of the class. Then there are the risks of failure, which are higher and more devastating than in the more protected self-contained class. Success when it comes may be more valuable, but failure may be more costly in terms of self-esteem.

Although the work is hard and the risk of failure high, there can be no question that one important benefit of the mainstreamed nonacademic classes is social contact. For Vicky and Bill especially, and even for Tim, Eddie and Stuart, their regular vocational and PE classes were a primary source of friends.

Perhaps, it is useful to speculate on the qualities of the nonacademic classes that seem to create a more positive environment for the low ability LD student. One factor is the degree of individualization and self-pacing. Individual industrial arts projects and assignments make it possible for students like Stuart and Tim to work diligently at their own speed to finish a particular project. Vicky's typing class had several fixed class assignments and timed tests each day which Vicky found difficult to keep abreast of. The flexibility of the vocational classes may work against the non-motivated students, however, since with no one prodding them to keep a timeline, they may get way behind -- e.g., witness Julian who wasted so much time in mechanical drawing.

Another factor may be the informality of the class and the willingness of the teacher to work individually with those who appear to need help. The LD student who requests assistance in these classes is relatively inconspicuous, since students are less noticeable asking for assistance in an informal, somewhat open class than they would be if the teacher had to make a specific move to recognize their need.

A third factor related to the success of the low ability students in their regular nonacademic classes is the relatively greater weight given to concrete products rather than written papers, assignments and tests. LD students frequently could produce adequate products, if not adequate written work.

The STP students with *moderate ability* are able to do well in their nonacademic classes; they are able to understand and complete the assignments -- even the written assignments. They do not feel under pressure, nor do they feel their learning problems are exposed. Their basic skills are sound enough for them to manage the academic content of the nonacademic classes.

These students enjoy their nonacademic classes; they are comfortable in class, like the subject matter, feel -- perhaps for the first time -- that they have talent and are capable of mastering a school course. Even if they are not motivated to work hard in their academic classes, their interest in the nonacademic class activities and increased self-esteem motivate them to work hard and succeed in their nonacademic classes.

The success of the moderate ability students in their regular academic classes is more problematic. In classes for the academically unsuccessful or low-achieving student, these students do well if they do the work and pay attention. Often these students are the better students in these classes and may even be "bored" with the slow pace and the time spent in class management rather than instruction.

The moderate ability students have a real struggle with their other academic classes. For these students, the class pace is fast, the reading assignments or problems difficult, and the curriculum expectations demanding. Jock manages by studying 6-8 hours at home every day, and taking the most difficult subject -- math -- in the resource class. Ben manages by being in a vocational program, which means he takes fewer academic subjects. Dick manages by working hard, using his charm and diplomacy to the utmost, and getting his resource teacher to intercede on his behalf. Ted, who does not work hard, is just not managing. Eddie takes his difficult academic courses as part of the self-contained program.

These moderate-ability students do not seem well served by either the resource or self-contained placement. The resource class is very helpful but it is not enough. Perhaps two periods of the resource class would provide an opportunity to get both support with the regular class assignments and basic instruction in a subject area. Dick's schedule, for example, could be:

PE (Type 6)
World culture (Type 3)
Algebra (Type 4)
Biology (Type 5)
English (taught through a resource class)
Basic Skills Review (Type 15)

With this schedule Dick could have one class period of English taught by the resource teacher and a second period when the resource teacher assists him as needed in his world culture and algebra classes and works on his other skill deficiencies.

Another possibility might be to mix resource and self-contained classes. Eddie's schedule might be:

PE (Type 6)
Mechanical drawing (Type 9)
Algebra (Type 4)
English (in self-contained program)
Earth Science (Type 3)
Basic Skills Review (Type 14)

Eddie would have English, which is his major deficiency area, in a self-contained class, and have one period in which he received support for his other regular classes as well as further assistance in his other skill deficiencies.

The high ability LD students who work diligently succeed in all regular academic classes and even in academic classes for college-bound students, but without that application of effort no amount of resource support or intervention seems to be effective. A resource teacher can only do so much to assist the LD student, both in the resource class and as a mediator with the regular teacher. The LD student must do the rest by attending classes, doing the homework, and at least appearing to be working at his or her capacity.

The success of both resource and self-contained students in their regular academic and nonacademic classes may be supported by the efforts of the learning disabilities teachers in several ways. First, the learning disabilities teacher may help the LD student with the work assigned in the regular class. This includes reading and/or interpreting instructions, helping to organize ideas for papers or projects, proofreading papers and other assignments, and making sure the student knows what is due when and that his or her assignments are done on time. The LD students in resource placements receive much more assistance with their regular class assignments than do the students in self-contained classes. The resource teachers believe their major responsibility is to support the LD student in his or her regular class work; the self-contained teachers believe their major responsibility is to teach the subject matter designated to be covered in their self-contained classes. Thus, the low ability students in self-contained programs need more but get less support in their regular classes than do the moderate and high ability resource students.

Second, the learning disabilities teacher may read test instructions, administer written tests orally, and allow students extra time to complete tests under their supervision. This type of assistance seems to be equally available to resource and self-contained students.

Third, the learning disabilities teacher may be an advocate for the students, explaining to regular teachers the nature of the student's disability, the modifications that are necessary to accommodate the student in his or her regular classes, and what teaching strategies might be effective when instructing the LD student. Part of the mediation or advocacy role involves explaining the distinction to be made between the learning disability and the student's level of motivation. The resource teachers seem to provide more of this advocacy and mediation than do the self-contained teachers. Again, contact with and support of the student's regular program is paramount for the resource teacher and of seemingly lesser significance than the subject area content to the self-contained teachers.

An important aspect of the least restrictive environment for the self-contained students is the location of their classes within the building. We had an opportunity to observe the effect of scattered and consolidated self-contained classroom sites. Having all the self-contained classes within the same area encourages communication and mutual support among the LD program staff. It may also make behavior management easier. Although the students have less contact with other nonhandicapped students in the school, they do have more contact with each other, and a close protective social network seems to have evolved among the self-contained students who share a common LD hall. This camaraderie carried over into the classroom and was quite therapeutic in making students comfortable with the learning disabilities classification. Of course, the LD resource students want no association with this area or these students.

In the school with scattered LD self-contained classes, there was more opportunity for contact between the LD students and the nonhandicapped students in the halls, at lunch, and in the locker and commons area, but the protective community among the LD students was not there. Some LD students -- particularly Wally Quinn, who was often taunted by the nonhandicapped students -- would have benefitted from the support this network might have offered.

5.4 Implications of the Least Restrictive Environment Provisions

5.4.1 Implications for Policy Makers

- Continuum between Resource and Self-contained Placement

The placement of LD secondary students must operate within the structure of classes, courses, credits, schedules, and time periods that characterize the organization of most high schools. In the school district of our study, placement in the resource class translated into taking a course for one period a day that supported but did not replace a traditional subject; placement in the self-contained program translated into taking general required subject matter courses through the learning disabilities program that substituted for the regular academic courses. At the high school level, there is a fundamental practical discontinuity between the resource placement, which represents support for regular classes one period a day, and the self-contained placement which represents replacement for regular classes and extends over several periods. Add to this discontinuity caused by the difference in staff in the two programs and different administrative structure, and the concept of a continuum must give way.

Custis County is exploring ways of integrating the resource and self-contained programs so that a student can have both types of services -- support to the regular program and substitutes for regular academic classes that are inappropriate even with resource-type support. New models of service delivery to secondary LD students that integrate resource and self-contained placements into a meaningful continuum need to be identified, evaluated and disseminated.

Not only are new models needed to insure the implementation of a continuum of alternative placements, but they may also be needed to implement placements as close to the student's home as possible. Our findings suggest that attending a special program in a different high school breaks down and limits social contacts significantly. Except in rare cases, students do not like to go to a different school from the one where their neighborhood friends and brothers and sisters go. Models of school-based programs are needed.

- Less Demanding Regular Academic Classes

Our findings suggest that moderate and low ability LD students definitely benefit from slow-paced academic classes.

Regular education attempt to provide academic instruction for academically unsuccessful students should be explored to determine to what extent these programs are appropriate for LD students. Efforts need to be undertaken to locate high schools that have developed good programs or classes for academically unsuccessful students and to explore whether these programs or classes can provide appropriate instructional environments for LD students. High schools with joint classes for LD students and nonhandicapped slower learning students might be investigated to determine how such efforts were begun, what barriers had to be overcome to implement these programs, and how successful they have been.

- Instructional Materials

Learning disabilities teachers complain about the lack of instructional materials. Self-contained teachers say there is not adequate material in the subject areas they teach; resource teachers say there are no materials to assist in developing basic study and organizational skills or in the other skill areas they attempt to develop or remediate. Everyone -- parents, students and teachers -- complain that there are no materials to teach reading; major learning weakness of many secondary LD students. Efforts are needed to make existing curriculum materials available and to develop materials in those areas where there are voids.

5.4.2 Implications for Program Administrators

- Attendance at the Home-Based School

Our findings suggest a definite preference on the part of the LD students to attend their home-based school. Every effort, including perhaps double or triple periods in the resource class, should be made to make that is possible, especially for students with strong ties to their home-based school. Every effort should be made not to transfer students, especially those who do not wish to be transferred from one school to another. Security, continuity and familiarity are important to an LD student, and they resent and resist being moved.

- Regular Class Support for Self-Contained Students

Because self-contained students attend regular nonacademic, vocational and occasionally academic classes, these students need the same type of regular class support the resource class provides. One of the self-contained student's teachers and perhaps part of his or her self-contained class period, should be available to support the student's regular work. The self-contained teachers need to view themselves as having many of the same supportive and mediating functions vis-a-vis the regular program that the resource teachers perform.

- Sense of Community for LD Self-Contained Students

The sense of community that has built up among the self-contained students at O'Brian, based on having their own physical space, suggests that the self-contained LD students may need a common meeting area where they can talk, feel safe and be part of a social unit. While grouping the LD classes on a common hall is one rather drastic way to accomplish this, other approaches such as an LD study room supervised by an aide or volunteer -- might offer a similar refuge for LD students in those high schools where the self-contained classes are dispersed.

- Resource Class Effectiveness

In our study, the effectiveness of the resource class depended on the receptivity of the LD student. Although our findings suggest that the self-contained students and parents view the self-contained program as indispensable, the resource students and their parents view the resource class as helpful but not indispensable. To function more effectively, the resource teachers may need to spend some time educating students on how to recognize when they need help, how to ask for help before it's too late, what type of help to ask for, and what effort the student must make for himself or herself to use the help sought. A resource teacher can never proof an unwritten paper.

- Mainstreaming

We have heard it said that LD teachers are too protective and afraid to turn the LD student loose. Perhaps that's true -- but there may be good reason for it. Three factors need to be considered in mainstreaming: the student's ability level, his or her motivation, and the type of class. While the STP students do not constitute a large enough grou from which to do more than speculate, certain observations can be made:

- -- High ability, highly motivated LD students will succeed in almost every class situation with (and possibly without) resource help.
- -- Low motivated students, even those with high ability, are in trouble; the resource teacher may prevent some trouble and provide an occasional bail-out, but this will not be effective for long unless the resource teacher can increase the student's motivation.
- -- Moderate ability, highly motivated students do well in slower paced academic classes and all nonacademic classes. One resource period a day is not quite enough time to cover all the areas in which the student needs help, but the very slow-paced, non-demanding instructional level of the self-contained classes is not appropriate for these students.
- -- Low ability students who work hard can survive regular nonacademic classes and very slow-paced academic classes, but for some students it may be a painful struggle.
- -- Low ability unmotivated students rarely survive in a regular class unless it is a class that particularly interests them.

Although these observations are not grounds for making placement decisions, the factors (type of class, ability, motivation) seem to be very clearly predictive of academic success in mainstreamed classes. The self-contained students need to be mainstreamed for as many regular classes as possible (given the three factors) for social reasons. The self-contained students use their regular courses as a social outlet and opportunity, and for that reason alone mainstreaming should be encouraged.

5.4.3 Implications for Teachers

- Special teacher support for regular classes

The LD teacher performs two direct functions that support the LD student in regular classes. First, the LD teacher assists the student directly with his or her regular classwork; and second, the LD teacher intercedes for the LD student to assure that the student is accommodated in the regular program.

With regard to the provision of direct assistance, our observations are that:

- -- Resource teachers provide this form of support very effectively if the LD student is open and receptive and communicates his or her immediate needs. Self-contained teachers do not view this as a primary responsibility, and little self-contained class time is allocated to providing assistance to the self-contained student in his or her regular program.
- -- The LD students, both resource and self-contained, receive relatively little assistance with their regular vocational classwork. This may be because LD teachers are less familiar with the subject matter and content of the vocational programs, or because they view academic classes as more important, or because they think the LD student can succeed in vocational programs without assistance.

Thus, it appears that self-contained teachers need to be more actively involved in providing support to LD self-contained students with their regular classwork, and that both self-contained and resource LD teachers need to extend their support of the LD student's participation in the regular program to include support for non-academic -- particularly vocational -- classes.

Assistance to LD students with their regular classes can take several forms:

- -- Helping the student schedule his or her study time for the day or week
- -- Developing the student's skill in taking notes from lectures; outlining his or her reading
- -- Assisting the student in organizing his or her thoughts and developing an organization or sequence of ideas for written reports or term papers
- -- Reading aloud and explaining written material to the student; proofreading the student's written assignments
- -- Helping the student understand his or her homework instructions, study for tests, and understand and learn from his or her homework or test mistakes.

The second major function performed by the LD teacher is to intercede for the LD student in various ways and at various times with his or her regular teachers. This may take several forms:

- Explaining the student's learning disability to the regular teacher
- Suggesting ways the regular teacher might modify instruction to accommodate the LD student
- Offering to assist the regular teacher by providing additional materials, crisis intervention, or alternative testing procedures
- Identifying regular teachers whose teaching styles match the needs of LD students and arranging for LD students to be placed in these classes
- Arranging for the LD student to participate in the extracurricular program of the school (e.g., to serve as an athletic team manager)
- Negotiating for the LD student in academic difficulty; arranging additional time to complete work, or second tries at failed tests.

Regular Class Accommodations

Our observation of classes and interviews with LD students suggest that certain instructional strategies are beneficial to the LD student. These strategies would also seem to be equally beneficial to the other students, and none of them require major overhauls in secondary school teaching patterns.

1. Lectures. Most LD students can listen to and comprehend a teacher's lecture. But it helps if as the teacher lectures he or she writes important points on the board so the student has visual as well as oral stimuli. LD students, especially, need material that is presented clearly and carefully structured. There needs to be emphasis and repetition of important points e.g., (e.g., "this is important; write this down; I'll say it again").

2. Board Work. Many LD students have difficulty copying from the board. There are some simple ways around this--handing out a written copy of the material on the board; allowing the student to stay after class to finish copying the material; or asking another student to allow the LD student to copy that student's notes.

3. Homework. Homework is a real burden on the LD student, since it frequently takes him or her longer to complete it. Perhaps the LD student can be given shorter assignments -- or assignments that are limited to the first set of problems if the problems are sequenced according to difficulty. Many LD students require more repetition to learn a concept. Thus, although it takes them more time to complete their homework, they actually should be doing more, not less of it. One way to solve this dilemma is to permit the LD student to do more of the easier exercises or problems. The quantity remains the same, but the emphasis is on solid mastery of the basic principles and not on tricky exceptions or applications.

Another solution might be to give LD students extra credit for extra homework or perhaps the LD student could turn in the same homework twice: first on the day its due, and second on the day after its been explained and the LD student has corrected it.

4. Projects. LD students appreciate the opportunity to work at their own pace on thier own projects. This allows them to pick topics of interest, to work without pressure, and to obtain help if necessary. Group projects may result in the LD student being left out, assigned a trivial task (to do the dishes), or being exposed. Group projects that are carefully structured so the LD student must be active may avoid some of those consequences.

5. Team learning. LD students learn well from other students. Formally pairing students in teams or study groups, or just informally allowing students to complete or correct homework or classwork in small groups, gives the LD student access to another student who can give help and encourages the social integration of the LD student.

6. Grades. LD students, geneally speaking, do not need a separate grading standard. But they may need additional opportunities to bring their grades up: e.g., doing extra homework, turning in homework or quizzes a second time after corrections, doing individual projects in lieu of or in addition to tests, being allowed more time on tests, or being allowed to take the same test a second time.

7. Individualization. The LD student generally does not require different or separate instruction from that provided other students, but he or she may need individual attention. The LD student may need to be individually encouraged to participate in class discussions by being asked questions that he or she can answer, and that do not expose the student's disability. They may need individual attention, hints, reminders on how to do activities, and encouragement, (e.g., "you're on the right track; it's just like what we did yesterday; remember to divide first by 2").

5.4.4 Implications for Parents

- Parents' Role in Placement and Program Decisions

Planning a least restrictive educational program for an LD student represents more than just considering whether the student should be in a resource or self-contained program. It's even more than deciding which classes the student should take through the regular program and which through the special education program. It requires understanding what the student's abilities and interests are and what type of classes and instructional styles are available.

Parents should recognize that the major way LD students compensate for their disability is by "trying hard." Parents need to encourage and reward this necessary extra effort, but not make unreasonable demands. Parents need to make an effort to understand their child's ability -- what subjects are hard, what basic skills are deficient or slower to develop, what areas cause frustration and failure. Parents also need to be realistic about the motivation level of their LD child -- how hard is he or she willing to work, how much pressure can he or she tolerate, whether he or she is willing to ask for help. Almost without exception, in order to succeed in regular classes the LD student must compensate for his or her learning disability by diligence and hard work. The more demanding the regular class, and the greater the student's disability, the harder the student must work. The resource or self-contained class teachers will provide some assistance to the LD student, and the regular teachers may provide some accommodation -- but the student factors are ever present.

Parents cannot make unreasonable study demands on their teenage children, but they can encourage good study habits by: creating a time and place where the young person can study uninterrupted; using persuasion and any other available incentives to insist that the student does in fact study, helping in whatever way possible with homework and other assignments; and rewarding conscientious. hard work, even if it does not immediately translate into good grades.

Parents must reinforce the efforts of their LD child, the learning disabilities teacher, and guidance counselor to place the LD student into courses and with teachers that are appropriate for their child. Parents can support their child's legitimate requests to be scheduled into or to change specific classes or teachers if the LD student has solid grounds for believing the specific class or teacher would be more appropriate.

5.4.5 Implications for Students

- Class Selection

The STP students were well aware of the type of class environment that accommodated their needs. They knew whether they needed a slower pace, less (or more) homework, clear explanations, individual attention, openness and informality (or structure), freedom (or discipline). And STP students knew or could find out which teachers would be suitable for them. If they don't know, they certainly should be encouraged to find out. If an LD student clearly explains (1) that he or she needs a certain kind of teaching style or class environment, and (2) that Mr. Lewis or Ms. Barry teaches that way or has that kind of class, then (3) that LD student should be scheduled into that class. The random assignment of LD students into regular classes should be replaced by legitimate, careful student selection of the type of class and teacher he or she feels will be most appropriate. The LD student's teachers, parents, and guidance counselor should be resources for this identification and matching process, providing the student with information and arranging a personalized (not randomized) schedule. If an LD student can offer legitimate explanation for why he or she wishes a particular teacher or class, there should not be administrative barriers preventing placement in that class.

- Coping Mechanisms

The principle coping mechanism of the successful LD student is to exert greater effort. LD students need to learn certain behaviors that give evidence of their interest and motivation to learn. Practicing these behaviors may increase their learning and will certainly improve their grades. Here are some suggestions:

1. Go to school.
2. Go to class (students learn just by being present).
3. Have your equipment with you (your books, notebook, paper, pencil); you can't do anything in class without equipment.
4. Pay attention; sit near the front so you won't be distracted, and at least listen to what the teacher is saying.
5. Take notes and copy what the teacher writes on the board, especially the right answers to the homework and tests.
6. Participate in the discussion; volunteer to answer an easy question or do an easy problem; if you're wrong it doesn't matter -- the teacher will correct you.
7. Do your homework; do as much as you can as neatly as you can; write down something for every problem or question.
8. Correct your homework and tests; look over your mistakes and be sure you know why you were wrong.
9. Study for tests; go over your notes and corrected homework; review the book; quiz yourself or have your parents or friends quiz you.

10. Get help early and often from your teachers, your parents, your friends.

These suggestions are not guaranteed to make the LD student learn more (although that may be a side benefit), but they do provide concrete, objective manifestations of the student's intent to learn. The LD student who acts like he or she wants to learn and intends to learn may not learn more than his or her non-handicapped peer -- but he or she will certainly earn recognition and commendation (euphemisms for good grades) from his or her regular teachers.

6.0 IMPACT OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT AND PROCEDURAL SAFEGUARD PROVISIONS

6.1 Parental Involvement and Procedural Safeguard Provisions of P.L. 94-142

The regulations implementing P.L. 94-142 provide for procedural safeguards that protect the rights of parents and students. In addition, other provisions in the regulations are intended to assure the participation of parents in the special education decision-making process. For discussion purposes, these procedural safeguards may be organized into two broad areas:

- rights to be notified and involved including the right to notice and consent and to participate in the development of the student's IEP.
- rights to impartial settlement of disputes including the right to an independent evaluation and to obtain a due process hearing.

Rights of notice and consent guarantee to parents that neither a preplacement evaluation nor the initial placement in a special education program can occur without the knowledge and informed consent, of parents. Not only do parents have the right to be notified and to consent but they also have the right to attend and participate in the meeting at which their child's individualized education program is developed.

Dispute settlement rights include the right to a due process hearing before an impartial hearing officer, as well as the right to administrative and civil action to appeal hearing decisions. Rights in evaluation guarantee to parents the right to obtain an independent, outside evaluation if they disagree with an evaluation obtained by the school.

In this study, each of the procedural safeguards was reviewed to determine how these safeguards were implemented for the STP students and their families. Since we view the practical outcome of these due procedural safeguards as ensuring greater parental participation in the process, the level of parental involvement was the focus of much of our analysis of these issues.

6.2 Implementation of Parental Involvement and Procedural Safeguards Provisions

6.2.1 Right to be Notified and Involved

All of the STP parents received written notice of their child's impending evaluation and the placement decision which resulted. Several had copies of evaluation summaries. Custis County requires that a notice about review committee decisions be sent to parents. This notice specifies that parents may request copies of the actual evaluation results. All of the STP parents felt that the schools had done an adequate or better job of keeping them informed about their child's progress in the program for learning disabled students.*

The schools in the study made a concerted effort to inform parents about student progress and/or problems and to gain parental support for and participation in the learning disabilities programs.

The mandated method for involving parents in the educational planning process is to insure their presence at the annual meeting to develop the required Individualized Education Program (IEP) for handicapped students. In Custis County every effort is made to encourage parent attendance at IEP meetings. Parents are sent letters followed by phone calls informing them of the date and time of the meeting. If parents still cannot attend, an effort is made to call them during the IEP session to discuss the content of the IEP. A copy of the completed IEP is then sent to parents who were not present (for signature) so that they are aware of the goals set for their child for the school year. Thus, the IEP affords a scheduled opportunity for parents to sit down with the special education teachers and administrators and discuss the student's current functional level and academic goals.

Despite the generally high level of parental involvement demonstrated by the parents in this study, many of them did not know what an IEP meeting was and could not relate the goals set for their children. School records indicated, however, that with the exception of Mrs. Warren and Mrs. Tupper, all STP parents did in fact attend an IEP meeting during the last school year. There were exceptions to this inability to remember meeting specifics. Mrs. Graves, for instance, was dissatisfied with the IEP goal which stated that her son, David would pass all his courses -- she felt that the goal should have been that David would do well in all his classes. Parents generally are not familiar with special education jargon, so it is not always easy to determine if the meeting they describe as an IEP meeting actually was such.

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*It should be noted that the selection of students for participation in the STP study was based upon a decision that certain parents would be more willing to participate than others -- based on previous interaction between the program administrator and the parents. As a result, STP parents represent a selection bias in favor of active parent participation in the education of learning disabled children.

In addition to the IEP meetings, the teachers in this study have made other efforts to involve parents. At West Forest High School, the self-contained program staff have experimented with several forums for bringing parents into the educational decision-making process. Among activities undertaken to meet this goal was a special evening program held so that parents could discuss their children's course selection process for the coming school year. Although the program was attended by relatively few parents, the department was pleased by the response of parents who did come and is planning to hold other meetings for parents' groups next year.

At O'Brian High School, the self-contained program director has devised several forms to send to parents describing the student's progress. One form involved a detailed breakdown of the child's performance, attendance, attitude, and progress in each class. Parents were sent this information on a quarterly basis -- as an interim report. Another form summarized evaluation results for the parents.

In both schools, teachers have made an effort to meet with parents at parental convenience -- teachers even schedule meetings very early in the morning to accommodate working parents. Unfortunately, parents sometimes forget about these meetings, or simply don't show up. The teacher who sacrificed personal time to make the special arrangements is left waiting at the school, frustrated and angry that the parents have "done it to them again." The teachers have to maintain a high level of personal commitment to persevere in their efforts to involve parents because this kind of thing happens frequently. Last year, both Stuart's and Anne's parents missed more than one scheduled meeting with LD staff.

Parent involvement in general tends to focus on crisis intervention. If the student is doing reasonably well in school and does not present behavior problems that require parental attention -- whether at school or at home -- most parents generally appreciate the status quo. If a student is doing poorly academically or is manifesting disruptive behavior, the parent is much more likely to question or be questioned by the school in an effort to deal with the problem. Another factor which contributes to the level of parental involvement seems to be the perception of parents about whether the school staff are allies in their efforts to deal with their sons and daughters. In this study, both LD self-contained program directors at O'Brian and West Forest High Schools were perceived by parents as being advocates of both parent and student concerns. Parents spoke frequently of calls made to these individuals, or vice versa, whenever there was a question regarding their child.

6.2.2 Right to Impartial Dispute Settlement

Although the law mandates two mechanisms by which parents may resolve disputes with the school system -- independent external evaluations and due process hearings -- neither has been employed by the STP parents. There have been disagreements of varying magnitude which focused on a variety of issues. For the most part, however, the resolution of these disagreements has been accomplished through face-to-face discussions.

Several of the STP parents have had strong opinions regarding the proper education for their children (for example, the Mallacks, the Warrens, the Fines, Ms. Quinn and Mrs. Tupper). Their desires have been, at various points in the past, at odds with the schools' actions. An analysis of the resolution of the conflict between these parents and the school provides insight into how disputes are typically settled through discussion and compromise. None of the STP parents has ever come close to resorting to formal dispute settlement mechanisms -- through either independent evaluation or third-party hearings.

Dispute settlement for STP parents is characterized by the following steps. First, a problem is identified. The problem may be from the school's perspective, the parents', or the child's, or may be a combination of concerns. Problems usually relate to whether specific services are to be provided or to placement decisions. Once an issue has been defined, parents, teachers or administrators and, infrequently, students meet to discuss the issue. This meeting may be initiated by the school or by the parents. Students almost never initiate meetings. At the meeting alternative solutions are discussed. Usually both sides give a little, and a compromise solution is reached.

In this study, the Mallacks came closest to initiating formal procedures to resolve a dispute with the school. When the school district attempted to end funding for Vicky's private school placement a few years ago, Mr. Mallack reacted very strongly. He wrote letters to the County Special Education Director expressing strong disagreement with the decision. He indicated that he might consider more formal action to keep Vicky in the private setting in which she had made excellent progress. The district reconsidered and allowed Vicky to remain at the private school until she reached the high school level. When the school district decided, after the eighth grade, that Vicky's tuition grant could not be renewed because an appropriate placement existed in the public high school, Mr. Mallack agreed that the change might be appropriate for Vicky. He felt that Vicky's social growth would advance in the public high school in a way that might not be possible in the private school setting.

Anne Tupper's parents felt that the school's suggestion that Anne's academic failures occurred because she did not try hard enough was very insufficient in dealing with Anne's increasingly bad grades and loss of interest in school. Anne's mother claims that she had sought help from the school for several years without getting a satisfactory response. Only after her private physician offered his support did she specifically ask for and succeed in obtaining an evaluation to determine if Anne had a learning disability. When Anne qualified for and was placed in a self-contained LD program, her parents felt great relief. They are pleased with the program, particularly Anne's academic success.

Mr. and Mrs. Warren have until recently been involved in a dispute involving Stuart's strongly expressed desire to go to his home-based high school, which did not have a self-contained program. The Warrens felt that Stuart belonged in a self-contained program and should remain in one, an opinion shared by the school. Both parents and school struggled to cope with Stuart's angry denouncement of his placement away from his friends and neighborhood. The Warrens attempted to minimize their responsibility by telling Stuart that the decision was up to the school. At school, Stuart heard that only his parents could get him released from the program. The school and the Warrens were unable to agree on a firm response to Stuart. Luckily for all, the neighborhood school is opening a new self-contained program next year.

The Fines are parents whose active involvement in their son's education raised serious questions in the minds of his teachers. The Fines have a concept of how much work Jock should do at home and what assistance the school should give Jock that seemed very rigid and demanding to Jock's teachers. The teachers made no real effort to express their concerns to the parents, however, since they felt that it was the parents' prerogative to set the requirements for Jock's study habits.

Finally, there is no evidence that any STP parents have sought to review their child's special education record, nor does it seem that any STP parents sought an independent evaluation in response to a disagreement over the school-initiated findings. Several STP families had arranged for private testing prior or complementary to the school's testing, but not as a result of dissatisfaction with the school's procedure or results. Parents who had obtained independent evaluations did so to assure themselves that they had as complete and thorough an assessment as possible and the best possible recommendations for appropriate interventions.

6.3 Impact of Parental Involvement and Procedural Safeguard Provisions

6.3.1 Information Sharing

As discussed earlier, Custis County is scrupulous about providing formal notice to parents of proposed evaluation and placement actions. What seems equally clear from our review of procedures and activities is that the county special education staff recognize the need for establishing and maintaining viable and active communication with parents of handicapped students. This recognition explains the general support of the IEP meeting, not only as a planning tool, but also as an assured way of meeting face-to-face with parents.

Even more than is the case with regular students and their parents, there is a sense that parent support is needed to sustain the activities of the special education programs. In Custis County, the special programs for parents, the special reporting forms, and the annual and triennial evaluation activities facilitate this communication. Another important communication link is the frequent phone calls made to parents by the learning disabilities program directors to discuss absences and academic or behavior problems. The trust that is built up between parents and learning disabilities teachers appeared to comfort many STP parents, who referred frequently to what had been told them by various members of the department.

The communication process is a two-way street. Teachers often learn facts from parents which explain student behavior and academic successes or failures. For instance, Jock Fine's parents, through the conferences they arranged with his teachers, were able to provide teachers with important information about his study habits at home. Wally Quinn's mother worked closely with his learning disabilities teachers so that coordinated efforts could be made to deal with his many problems.

Parent involvement in the decision-making process and information provided by the school helps to educate parents about their child's problems. This education can only stimulate better understanding and thus better relationships between parents and students and between parents and schools. Parents who are well-informed are better advocates for their children, and certainly children need advocates to survive the bureaucratic maze of public education.

6.3.2 Dispute Settlement Contacts

Disagreements between STP parents and the school have been settled generally by school-parent discussion and by school acquiesence to parent wishes. The degree of school acquiescence is related to financial considerations. As long as the school had an operating program which could meet what parents felt their son or daughter needed, the school was willing to go a long way towards meeting parents' requests. However, if the school had to incur any financial burden to implement an activity at parental request, the school was much more likely to resist the parents' plan. For example, Dick Bison's parents proposed that Dick be allowed to mainstream several classes in exchange for Dick's cooperation in moving into an LD class which he thoroughly disliked. This proposal was accepted by the school as a way of resolving a sharp conflict between Dick and the school. On the other hand, Mr. Mallack had to threaten court action to get the school district to continue Vicky's private school placement after what the school believed were "appropriate alternatives" became available.

The school seems eager to avoid major confrontation with parents and even with students. Sally Benson is a good example. Her threat to quit school rather than be transferred to a new school because she wanted to be with her boyfriend at West Forest was taken seriously by her social worker and the school staff. She is being allowed informally to continue at West Forest, even though the other STP students who were being transferred were told they had no choice but to make the move.

The experiences of the STP parents and students indicate that it is a rare and real failure of the existing system for a dispute to get to the stage of requiring a formal hearing to bring about resolution. The only flaw in the discussion process observed in this study was that students seem to have difficulty getting a hearing for their grievances if their parents were not supportive of their particular complaint. Stuart Warren was very frustrated when he could not get a straight answer to his request to be transferred back to the home-based school.

6.4 Implications of the Parental Involvement and Procedural Safeguard Provisions

6.4.1 Implications for Policy Makers

- Benefits of Parent Notice and Consent

The benefit of giving notice and seeking informed consent goes far beyond the satisfaction of legal requirements. Activities associated with both these efforts are effective in helping to establish a communication channel between parents and schools. This communication facilitates parent understanding of learning disability problems and of as the programs designed to deal with the problems. The opportunities for communication created through efforts to give notice and obtain consent should be expanded so that greater parental involvement can be obtained. From the STP study, it is clear that active parental involvement is a key factor in the success of students in the LD program -- partly because parents sometimes push the program to get specific help for the students, and partly because program staff can convince parents to encourage students to keep working within the program. The positive effect -- in terms of creating parent trust and opening lines of communication -- of activities associated with giving notice and gaining consent should be recognized; and more attention should be given to helping schools expand these opportunities to bring parents into the process.

- Informal Settlement of Disagreements

For both STP families and other families in Custis County, the informal settlement of disputes through face-to-face discussion is the primary method of resolving disagreements. This method of handling disputes saves time and money and prevents major hostility from developing. Technical assistance activities which will help administrators and teachers develop and carry out this kind of activity are needed. Certainly the relationship between giving proper notice and avoiding disputes should be further explored. As indicated earlier, the communications link and the sense of trust which has its foundation in notice and consent activities create an atmosphere in which parents are more comfortable going to the school whenever an issue develops regarding the student's special education program.

6.4.2 Implications for Program Administrators

- Facilitation of Parent Contact

Program administrators need to continue to expand their efforts to reach parents -- through special programs, special reporting mechanisms, and support of as much teacher-parent contact as possible.

Administrators should encourage staff to experiment with different types of parent -- school programs. If a program which discusses student course selection does not generate much interest, perhaps a program on vocational preparation would. Administrators can poll parents' ideas, -- either formally or by soliciting teacher comments on parent questions -- about what issues are of most concern. These issues can then be addressed in evening programs or in flyers sent home to parents. Issues of concern to STP parents were varied; but the cause of learning disabilities, the role parents could play at home, and the possibility of remediation of poor reading skills were shared concerns of all STP parents.

Program administrators should recognize that the burden of communication with parents falls on individual teachers, who often make efforts beyond the call of duty to keep in contact with parents. Teachers in the STP study made calls at night, came in very early in the morning to meet parents, and sometimes stayed late after school. Administrators should support teachers in these efforts by recognizing officially the work done by teachers in this regard. They should encourage such activities by incorporating discussions about the importance and difficulties of communication into inservice training or departmental meetings. Finally, administrators can work to facilitate parental access to teachers by asking for outside phone lines to the learning disabilities department. It is much easier to talk to learning disabilities teachers when it is possible to call them directly without going through the office.

• Informal Dispute Settlement Procedures

The informal procedures involved in teacher-parent communication work because there are no barriers created by paperwork, official forms, etc. From this perspective, nothing should be done to tamper with a very successful mechanism. However, recognition of the importance of this kind of dispute settlement can lead to actions which will improve its application and increase its use.

Parents should be encouraged to contact the school whenever they have *any* question about their child's program. They can be sent a special notice about whom to call, when to call, and what numbers to call to get answers about specific questions. Teachers can be given specific help in learning to identify problems, solicit parent input, and manage face-to-face problem-solving discussions with parents.

6.4.3 Implications for Teachers

• Parent Education

There are several ways in which teachers can expand upon their efforts to educate and involve parents. First, teachers should recognize how dependent on them parents feel towards teachers when they want to know how their child is doing in school. Teachers are usually the only school persons known to parents (although in learning disabilities programs, the program directors assume much of the responsibility of parent contact). Teachers have the most direct experience with the student and know better than anyone else how the student is progressing, what attitudes or behaviors are creating problems, and whether the student is making reasonable efforts to succeed. This information is very important to parents, who can feel helpless about their own ability to direct their child's efforts in school. Consequently, teachers should persist in their efforts to communicate with parents. Even if parents do not seem immediately responsive -- by coming to meetings, for example -- they are aware (as discussed by several STP parents) of teacher efforts and of school programs. Their confidence in what the school is trying to accomplish is increased if they feel that the school and the teacher are making real efforts on behalf of their children.

- Parent Support at Home

In the STP study, there was some evidence that parents would have been responsive to more direct teacher efforts to get parents to help students at home. Several parents had, on their own, gone to school to get specific course schedules and requirements. Other parents had set study hours at home for students having academic difficulty. Parents -- particularly of resource students -- seemed eager to do something to help their children along. Parents of the self-contained students were also eager to help, but expressed the feeling that there was little they could do. Although little course work is done outside the classroom in the self-contained classes, self-contained teachers could prepare course schedules and requirements for parents interested in helping at home. The STP parents who were informed of class activities became stricter with students who claimed they had not understood when assignments were due or when tests were scheduled. This strictness did not always result in improved performance, but it did allow attention to be more properly focussed on motivational and organizational problems.

- Early Identification and Resolution of Conflict

Teachers have an important role to play in discovering areas of dissatisfaction felt by students and parents and helping to bring about early resolution of conflict. Among the STP students, several had problems which had been recognized but were not dealt with by teachers or parents. Sally's concern over transferring to a new program, Wally's fear when mistakenly placed in a regular education program at the beginning of the school year, Eddie's, Julian's, and Bill's growing disinterest with school -- all these represent problems which teachers can recognize early and ought to pursue by contacting parents, talking to students, and making referrals to guidance counselors or school psychologists. Admittedly, these are not the problems of placement which would usually lead to formal dispute settlement activities; but they are usually the kinds of problems with the most specific impact on an individual student's success or failure within a special education program.

Therefore, teachers should be encouraged to take direct actions to uncover possible parent or student concerns and to facilitate conflict resolution, either by pursuing concerns directly or by making a referral to those who may be able to solve the problem.

6.4.4 Implications for Parents

- **Parent-School Communication**

Parents should understand that growth in their own understanding of learning disabilities and learning disabilities programs will enable them to help their children solve their problems. This support by parents can be very crucial to LD adolescents who are anxious and filled with self-doubt because of their troubles at school.

Parents should take advantage of the opportunities made available by school administrators and teachers to learn about their child's problems and what the school program is trying to do about these problems. Parents benefit from this involvement because their understanding helps allay their own concerns and helps them understand the concerns often felt, but not easily expressed, by many of the STP students.

Parents should respond to school overtures by attending meetings and programs sponsored by the schools. They should seek answers to the questions and resolutions to their concerns by contacting teachers as well as other responsible school personnel. Parents can encourage school activities aimed at sharing information by being responsive, by participating in parent-school meetings (IEP and others) and, perhaps most importantly, by sharing their concerns with the teachers and program administrators. Parents should call their child's teacher when they have questions; they should speak out if they are dissatisfied. Several STP parents shared concerns with us which they had not discussed with the school. For example, Eddie Lawrence's mother was very unhappy with the discrepancy which existed between his excellent grades in the self-contained program and his relative inability to read. David Graves' mother felt that his IEP goals were too unstructured and not specific enough. Both these dissatisfactions seemed to be very valid ones; but little could come from parental concern which had not been expressed to teachers or other school officials. Finally, parents should make an effort to learn what their rights are in the education process, and they should those rights freely -- both for their own peace of mind and the welfare of the student.

6.4.5 Implications for Students

- Students' Role in Decisions

The primary effort which students must make to get concerns acknowledged and resolved is to share those concerns with parents and teachers. Students should recognize that they have rights which should be respected by the school system and by their parents. One way for a student to gain respect for these rights is to stay as informed as possible about school and class activities and expectations. LD students should feel free to ask what being a learning disabled student means, what can be expected from learning disabilities classes, and what parents can do at home to help.

Admittedly, obtaining answers to these questions can be a formidable task for an LD student -- especially when one recognizes that even students like Stuart Warren who do express their concerns do not always get a complete hearing from parents or teachers. Equally problemmatic is a response which is not a response the student wants to hear -- as in Stuart's case.

Still, STP students were often able to get their point across and get their own way. For example, Ben Long and Peter Lazer succeeded in getting their parents to have them released from the program. Dick Bison went in and out of the program a couple of times with his parents' consent. Sally Benson managed to stay at O'Brian at least temporarily. These accomplishments represent a high level of communication between the student, the family and the school staff.

APPENDIX I

Description of Class Environments

DESCRIPTION OF CLASS ENVIRONMENTS

Regular Academic Programs for College Bound Students (Type 2)

Administrative Contact

The teachers of these classes are the least interested in adjusting their programs, academic demands or style of teaching for the LD student. They will do such minimum things as permit the LD student to sit near the chalkboard and read the assignments that are written on the board. They have STANDARDS and expect the LD student will be able to meet them. These teachers are willing, however, to converse with the LD resource teachers to explain assignments, the course outine, and test requirements, and they are willing and even encourage the LD resource teacher to help the student, if necessary. In all fairness, these teachers believe that any student who tries hard will not fail their classes so that more than minimum special arrangments should not be necessary.

Physical Location

These classes are interspersed with other regular classes, often on a hall or wing with other classes in the same subject area.

Participant Composition

These classes are large -- 30-35 students -- and have one teacher. There are at most one or two of the least disabled LD students in these classes. Most of the students, including the LD students, are planning to go to college. Although the extremely high achieving and gifted students are not in these classes, most of the students are very bright and academically talented.

Social Climate

These classes are characterized as well-disciplined, orderly, carefully managed classes. There is a fair amount of social interaction before and after class and some limited conversation (usually task-directed) during class. The social tone of the students is friendly but managed. They cooperate with each other on task-related activities.

Instructional Conditions

These classes have a strong work- or goal-directed orientation. Every student pays attention, contributes to discussion, has his or her homework done. The academic content moves at a rapid, fixed pace. The teacher lectures often; students take notes. There is a lot of reading or other homework. Students are responsible for keeping up with the reading and the assignments; tests are hard and everyone studies for them.

Impact on LD Students

These classes are high-risk, high-payoff classes (personally, socially, and academically), but they demand extremely hard work and only the most able of the learning disabilities students "need apply." Deeter has managed to succeed in two of these classes but he is talented, works very hard, and is very likeable.

Regular Academic Class (Type 3)

Administrative Contact

These classes form the bulk of the academic program of the high school. There is tremendous variability in these classes depending on the teacher. The administrative strategy when placing an LD student in these classes is to identify particular teachers whose style of teaching and academic demands are appropriate for an LD student, and then not to overwhelm that teacher with too many or too unmanageable LD students that he or she becomes discouraged or resentful. Thus, the academic relationship between the LD resource teacher or less frequently the LD self-contained program director is one in which the LD teacher identifies particular teachers willing and interested in adjusting their instruction to accommodate an LD student, working with those teachers to figure out the particular accommodations needed, and providing occasional assistance in the form of special materials. A major part of the success of an LD resource teacher is being able to discover, encourage, and convince teachers to accept and accommodate the LD student. With a good foundation laid, the interaction and communication between the LD teacher and the regular teacher will continue, with the regular teacher gradually developing teaching skills and approaches that are effective with LD students. In short, with at least some of the teachers of these classes there is a growing degree of cooperation and the hope and goal is to place the LD students with one of these teachers.

Physical Location

These classes are interspersed with other regular classes, often on a hall with other classes in the same subject area. These clases are not as large as the classes for college-bound students but they are large: 25 to 30 students and one teacher. Absenteeism may be higher, however, so on any given day the number in class may be below 25. Since the teachers of these classes are sought out to teach LD students, these classes may have four or five LD students in them. The other students are both in college-bound and general vocational programs; they range in ability from quite talented to being lower achieving than some of the LD students.

Social Climate

These classes are relatively informal. There are conversations, sometimes boistrous, before, after, and often during class. There is movement in and out of class (passes to the library, career center, bathroom, etc.) and a sort of general wigglyness during class. Full class disruption is rare, but minor surface noise is almost always present. Some of the conversation is task-directed, but usually it's personal.

Instructional Conditions

There is not the same level of work orientation and task attention in these classes as in the classes for college-bound students. At any one time as many as half the students may be either resting, talking with a friend, doing other homework, staring into space or doodling. Teachers seem to ignore most of this inattention, although occasionally a teacher will suggest students stop talking, pay attention, begin working, settle down. These requests are infrequent and usually disregarded. Instead, the teacher directs the discussion and works with those who are paying attention. The message seems to be: "If you want to work, fine; if not, it's your future."

The academic demands in these classes are neither difficult nor easy. The teachers follow the prescribed curriculum. But particular assignments may be adjusted for the LD student. A fair number of the assignments consist of individual or group projects which the LD student can accomplish more easily and with greater success than the individual weekly written assignments, daily exercises and quizzes that typify the classes for college-bound students.

Impact on Students

LD students do well in these classes if they get one of the accommodating teachers (and if they don't they try to arrange a schedule change). The class is not difficult and if they pay attention and do the work they end up with good grades. When they have difficulty, these teachers meet them halfway, adjusting the assignments or the work schedule or arranging special help.

Regular Academic Classes for Advanced Students (Type 4)

Administrative Contact

These classes are similar to the regular classes for average students in the nature and type of contact between the regular and LD teachers. The regular teachers in their classes expect to have students whose academic progress is below average, so they are prepared for and accept the assistance of the LD teachers. Teachers of these courses are quick to point out that they have several students in their classes who are "worse off" than the LD students and who they wish could get some help from the special education program.

Physical Location

These classes are interspersed with other classes, usually on the same hall or wing as other classes in the same subject. The teachers of these classes also teach more advanced courses in the same subject so there is no stigma to these classes.

Participant Composition

These classes are average in size: 25-30 students, but abseentism is high. About one-fourth of the students are LD students, mostly resource students with an occasional self-contained student who seems capable of taking some regular academic classes. Often these classes contain students of average or better general ability but who have difficulty with that particular subject area (e.g., girls with a dislike and/or avoidance of math or boys with a dislike of English).

Social Climate

The social climate of these classes resembles that of the regular academic classes for general students. These classes are loose and informal. Students work or not as they choose; often there is conversation among students. The main distinction between these classes and the academic classes for general students is the pervasive feeling that most students don't know, like, or understand what's going on, so that the socialization seems to be more an escape than a natural communication and sharing of interests. Often the conversation is task-related, with students attempting to learn (or copy) from their peers the explanations, problem solutions, and notes they cannot understand themselves.

Instructional Conditions

These classes are the next-to-the-bottom rung on an informal tracking system. Students arrive in these classes by the process of elimination. They cannot handle the pace and instructional demands of the classes in that subject area for college-bound students or general students. The teachers in these classes have academic expectations for these students; the students are expected to meet the curriculum goals set for the subject area. Thus, there is a work atmosphere in these classes. The pace of instruction is slow. In the math department, for example, algebra is taught in two years rather than one. Even with a pace of one-half that of the regular course, the students have difficulty understanding the material. This may be a result of several factors: a) poor basic skills (decimals and fractions in algebra are just as much a problem as they are in arithmetic); b) instruction that, although slower, is not slow enough; c) homework and problems that do not provide enough practice with the basic concepts before moving into special application and "tricky stuff"; and d) lectures and discussion of homework that is unclear or not repetitive enough.

The students in these classes pay attention until they become frustrated ("I'll never understand this stuff") or hostile ("I hate math") or resentful ("This stuff is of no use to me anyway"). Then the escape conversation begins. When the pressure of an impending test is present, then the students' attention takes on an anxious quality.

Impact on the LD Student

These classes offer the LD student an opportunity to take regular academic subjects in the slowest, least demanding class possible. Yet, it is clear that the LD student without minimum basic skills will feel frustrated in these classes and that all too often that frustration will be shared. Many of the LD resource students could not survive without these courses; they offer these students the only viable way to obtain the required credits in math and English that they need for graduation. And for some it is their way of satisfying certain college entrance requirements.

Regular Academic Classes For Academically Unsuccessful Students (Type 5)

Administrative Contact

Usually these classes are conducted with the full knowledge and support of both the LD and regular education program. But these classes are regular classes and priority may be given to students who are not in the LD program. There is usually close cooperation between the two programs in planning these classes and between the LD teachers and the regular teacher who teaches the class. The science class at West Forest had a regular teacher with an LD teacher aide functioning as a team, but that degree of integration may be unusual.

Physical Location

These classes are interspersed with other classes, often on the same hall or wing as other classes in the same subject area.

Participant Composition

These classes are small, 20-25 students, and have high absentee rates, so attendance may be between 15-20 students. Often as many as one-third to one-half of the students are LD students. The other students are all low achieving but for different reasons: low motivation, disruptive behavior, low general intelligence. Some are general school misfits and incorrigibles. The teacher of these classes often has some special training and may be given special materials, more planning time, or other support.

Social Climate

These classes, at best, resemble the relaxed, social informality of the regular academic class. From that, they may, on a bad day, deteriorate to noise and disorder. There is conversation but generally the students in these classes are not good friends. The students in these classes bring their reputations with them. Thus, the LD students are fearful of "mixing" too closely with the students known to them as troublemakers.

The teachers in these classes are concerned with motivation and control first and academic content second. Thus, they attempt to provide structure and order to the class and to be firm in their demands for attention and self-discipline.

Instructional Conditions

Because many of these students are not academically motivated and/or have had failure experiences, there is attention given to providing activities that are interesting at which the students can succeed. Concrete, hands-on contact with materials, lots of good grades and opportunities to repeat an assignment or test until a passing grade is achieved.

The academic demands of these classes are greatly reduced. The pace is slower, with more explanation and repetition. The activities require very little reading and writing. The LD self-contained student and more seriously disabled resource student in these classes is very comfortable. The work is not too difficult, the class is small enough to get individual assistance. Even though the academic demands are reduced, because it is a regular class there is a stronger work orientation than prevails in the self-contained classes.

Impact on the LD Student

These classes offer the LD student a controlled, limited form of mainstreaming with some expanded social contacts and greater although manageable learning opportunities. It may be not demanding enough for the higher functioning resource students and it will be totally inappropriate if many of the non-LD students are serious behavior problems.

Prevocational and Vocational Single Period Classes Offered in the High School (Type 9)

Administrative Contact

Except in rare instances there does not seem to be much, if any, interaction and only limited integration of the special education and vocational programs. Exceptions may occur if the student requests help in a vocational subject from an LD teacher or if there is a social or physical proximity between the two teachers or their classrooms.

Physical Location

These classes are located in designated vocational areas.

Participant Composition

These classes vary in size but are not usually large (less than 25 typically); the advanced classes may be quite small. There are not many college-bound students in these classes but there may be several high achieving and high ability students. The teacher is selected in large part for his or her vocational skill and seldom has had much training or experience with LD students.

Social Climate

These classes are more informal than academic classes, perhaps because there is a conscious attempt to mirror the work environment. This means there may be converation but it should be accompanied by productivity. Thus, there is discipline and control but more of a job supervisor over his or her work than a teacher over students.

Instructional Conditions

These classes can be fairly demanding in terms of assignments, projects, and even tests. Since the goal is to improve technical rather than academic skill, the instructional demands may be satisfied with one or more carefully executed projects, a requirement that causes less difficulty for the LD students. Most of the students in these classes are working productively. They are usually interested in the class and enjoy the work so that doing the assignments or projects is not onerous.

Many of these classes have "hidden" academic demands -- they require math computation or reading of instructions. In these classes, when these demands arise, the LD student needs help. Fortunately the vocational teachers seem willing to provide help or to permit the LD student to obtain help from another student.

Impact on the LD Student

Generally, the LD students find these classes fun, not too difficult and a good social outlet, and they usually pass with a good grade. For a few LD students who are not interested in the work or who find it too difficult, the lack of structure and supervision may result in these students just slippping by virtually unnoticed.

Vocational Classes Offered In a Vocational Center (Type 10)

Administrative Contact

There seems to be relatively little contact between the LD resource teacher or the self-contained program director and the vocational education teachers. Part of the reason for the lack of contact may be the physical separation of the two programs. Another reason may be the LD teachers' lack of familiarity with the vocational education subject matter. The carpentry instructor of one STP student explained that he had given the LD self-contained program director a complete set of the carpentry text and written materials so that she could help the student with the reading and written assignments. But there seemed to be no time available to be allocated to providing that kind of assistance. There is no LD teacher assigned to the vocational center, although the vocational education staff has requested one.

Physical Location

These classes are located at the vocational center which may or may not be the student's home base school or the school in which the student's self-contained program is located.

Participant Composition

The number of students in these classes is about 20-25. In those vocational programs that do not require advanced basic skills (carpentry, bricklaying, child development), one-third to one-half may be from a learning disabilities program. The teacher is usually experienced in the craft or professional area and may have little or no experience with or training to teach LD students.

Social Climate

The students in these classes are treated like on-the-job workers. They clock in and out, have snack breaks, can converse with each other. The teacher acts as a work supervisor providing training.

Instructional Conditions

The students are expected to do the "bookwork" and pass the written tests. But the major instructional strategy is teacher demonstration followed by student practice. A highly motivated student will find many opportunities to practice and a nonmotivated student will do the bare minimum. The teacher is concerned that each student do the minimum but leaves it up to the student to determine how much beyond that he or she wishes to do.

Impact on the LD Student

The LD student who is motivated and who has enough skill to read and complete the written work (or to find other ways to get it done) will enjoy these classes and will acquire extensive and useful skills. These classes provide good opportunities for developing friendship and give the previously unsuccessful LD student a new perspective.

For some LD students, the vocational program may be just as frustrating as their academic classes. There are basic academic skills required and work performance expectations that some LD students may not achieve. For these students a vocational program becomes another frustration and failure.

Self-Contained Classes (Type 13)

Administrative Contact

The LD self-contained program staff has minimal contacts with other classes and programs. If, as has happened at West Forest, the LD self-contained program director is particularly concerned about career development and vocational preparation, he or she may contact vocational programs and teachers, but there is no formal mechanism to facilitate this contact. While the resource teacher constantly tried to integrate resource class instruction with the regular program, self-contained teachers by contrast seem almost totally separate from it. There is little support offered to the self-contained student in his or her mainstreamed classes.

Physical Location

At O'Brian the self-contained program occupies a general area of three or four classrooms between two staircases. That area has its reputation and other students leave that area alone. At West Forest the self-contained classes are held all over the building.

Participant Composition

The size of the LD self-contained classes is small, about 8-10 students, which may be reduced by half because of absenteeism. The classes are disproportionately boys, which restricts the social opportunities for the girls. The students, although all have some learning disability, have a wide range of reading ability and other basic skills and varying degrees of motivation and self-discipline.

Social Climate

The LD self-contained classes are generally informal, with a fair amount of physical movement, general "finger snapping, foot-tapping" noise and minor pinches, pokes and grab-type interactions. This tends to settle some once the class begins, but it is always ready to flair up again if the teacher lets the guard down. During class the students are reasonably quiet. The students know each other well but are by no means a socially cohesive network, although there may be a core of student who serve a social leaders who get along well together.

There is a real stigma attached to the LD self-contained program. The students definitely feel it but generally try to ignore it. Each student in the LD self-contained program knows that the regular class is not a realistic alternative. They accept and even welcome their LD self-contained classes as well worth any stigma that may be attached.

Instructional Conditions

The emphasis in the self-contained class is on maintaining order and control first, and imparting some new knowledge second. The instruction in the self-contained class is subject oriented, covering basically the same material as the curriculum guide suggests for the regular academic courses only at a slow pace and simplified level. Despite the fact that most of the LD students in self-contained programs have severe reading deficits, little systematic instruction is given for developing reading skill.

The students in self-contained classes pay attention and participate in the class discussions. This is partly a phenomenon of the small class size. With only eight people it is not difficult to be sure each person has an opportunity to respond to a discussion question or to be sure each person is doing the assigned class work.

Although the students are attentive and participating, these classes lack a certain realness that is present in the regular class. It is hard to describe, but the tone of the self-contained class seems to convey the message: this is not a real class, this is an exercise, an approximation or imitation of a real class put on for LD students; but we don't mind, we have fun, talk around a lot, learn a few things and don't have to work too hard.

Impact on the LD Student

The LD students generally like their self-contained classes and they seem comfortable in class although not completely satisfied with their own progress. None of these students view the resource program as an appropriate alternative even though it is less stigmatizing.

Resource Class (Type 15)

Administrative Contact

The resource teacher maintains contact with the student's regular program in three major ways: 1) discussing with the LD student to determine how he or she is doing in each class and which classes are giving trouble; 2) speaking informally with the students' teachers, particularly those who teach the classes where the student has reported having problems or those who have asked for the assistance of the resource teacher (a rare phenomenon); and 3) sending out a written form that gives background information on the student and allows for teacher comments to each of the student's regular teachers twice each quarter. Although the first two of these three methods may be more preventive in nature, the last method assures that the resource teacher is informed about problems that the student has not mentioned and that the regular teacher has an opportunity to seek the assistance of the resource teacher to prevent future problems. Typically, the resource teacher will learn that an LD student is about to receive an interim report (a report sent to parents before the end of the quarter warning that unless some positive change occurs the student will receive an F or D in that class). The resource teacher, if he or she was not previously aware of the problem, can then work with the student and the regular teacher to bring up the student's grade.

The resource teacher uses both the formal written forms and the informal contact to share with regular teachers the LD student's functioning level in reading, math and spelling and his or her strengths and weaknesses in such areas as visual discrimination and auditory perception. The resource teacher may make recommendations for changes in the student's regular program based on the student's disability, such as to write assignments on the board and give them orally, to allow the LD student more time to complete assignments, to read aloud and explain clearly test instructions.

Not all regular teachers are equally responsive to the resource teacher's requests for information, suggested modifications, or the offers of assistance, but given time most regular teachers will cooperate with the resource teacher's eforts to assist the students. Regular teachers are much more willing to support the resource teacher's efforts to assist the student than they are to make modifications in their own teaching styles, class requirements, and grading standards to accommodate the student.

Physical Location

At West Forest the resource classes are held in small office-type classrooms located around the building. There are between 4-6 students in a resource class at one time, but the office holds only three persons comfortably.

At O'Brian, the resource classes are held in one large classroom that includes two teachers working with different students. Thee may be 8-12 students in the room at any one time. The classroom at O'Brian is inconspicuously located at the end of a long hall where there is not much traffic.

Participant Composition

There are only a very small number of students working with the resource teacher at any one time and each student has a completely individualized program.

Social Climate

The resource class is generally very quiet, each student working on his or her own assignment. The students rarely talk with each other. There is some stigma attached to going to the resource class but probably not as much as is associated with the self-contained program.

Instructional Conditions

The primary instruction offered in the resource class is supportive of the student's regular program. Resource teachers use the student's regular class assignments to develop organization and sequencing skills, basic study skills such as note-taking and outlining, and skills in written expression, reading, comprehension and spelling. Practically, this means the resource teacher will assist the LD student in such regular class activities as: planning and organizing a term paper, reviewing for a test, understanding a difficult reading assignment, understanding the instructions to a particular problem. The LD student can use the resource class to finish tests for which he or she needs more time; the resource teacher may be able to explain (decipher) a student's notes from a class lecture. When working with students in support of their regular classes, the resource teachers are limited by their own lack of background in certain areas, particularly math, science and certain technical vocational material.

If a student has no regular class assignments that require attention, the student may work on correcting some basic skill deficit such as spelling, reading comprehension, or writing. Resource teachers maintain worksheets and other individual assignments in reserve for those days.

Some LD students use the resource class as a substitute for an academic subject. The student concentrates all or almost all of his or her resource instruction time on a particular skill area such as math.

Impact on the LD Student

The LD student either finds that the resource class is supportive of his or her regular class work or that the basic skill instruction offered there is necessary, or he or she withdraws. Those students who accept the resource program appreciate the quiet study hall atmosphere and the one-to-one instruction.

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SPECIAL TEENS AND PARENTS

A Study of the Impact of P.L. 94-142 on Learning Disabled Adolescents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Judith Andrews Agard
Ruth W. Brannon

Submitted to:

Ms. Barbara Hobbs
Education Program Specialist
Office of Special Education
and Rehabilitative Services
U.S. Department of Education
Washington, D.C. 20202

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The Special Teens and Parents (STP) Study investigated the impact of certain provisions of P.L. 94-142 on learning disabled adolescents and their parents. The study, conducted by Abt Associates Inc. for the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, focused on provisions related to protection in evaluation, individualized education program (IEP), placement in the least restrictive environment, parental involvement and procedural safeguards. It sought to determine the effect of these provisions on learning disabled secondary students and those responsible for developing and implementing their educational programs.

STUDY DESIGN AND DESCRIPTION OF STUDENTS

The STP study design used a clinical-ethnographic methodology to collect information on 16 learning disabled secondary students. The STP students were selected from resource and self-contained placements located in two high schools in a large, suburban, county-based school district. The school district serves an area of primarily affluent and well-educated families. Historically, the school district has provided quality educational programs for handicapped students.

Information on the 16 STP students was collected at multiple time points, in multiple environmental settings, and from multiple perspectives over an entire school year. Case analysts familiar with learning disabled students and the provisions of P.L. 94-142, conducted informal, unstructured interviews with students, their parents, teachers and other involved school staff; the case analysts observed the students in both regular academic and vocational classes and in special education resource and self-contained settings. The students' psychological and educational records were also reviewed.

Case narratives were prepared for each STP student and updated quarterly based on the information collected. Information from the STP students' case narratives was organized, synthesized and interpreted to assess the impact of selected P.L. 94-142 provisions on learning disabled students. For each of the P.L. 94-142 provisions, the study investigated:

(1) how the requirements of the law were implemented by the secondary school special education program; (2) the impact of the school program and practices on the learning disabled students; and (3) the implications of the experiences of the STP students for those concerned with the education of learning disabled adolescents: policymakers, program administrators, teachers, parents and students.

The STP students represented diverse physical characteristics and a range of social and educational skills and ability. The students comprised 3 girls and 13 boys; two students were in ninth grade, the rest in tenth grade. None of the STP students' families was poor; a few were wealthy; most of the employed parents held professional or managerial positions, and a few were owners of their own small businesses.

Although generally the STP students were able to maintain a satisfactory level of academic achievement in their regular and special education classes, they did so by working hard; harder than they perceived their peers working. All of the STP students found the academic demands of school to be difficult, but most enjoyed the school social environment and expected to remain in school. The STP students all knew and had accepted the fact that they had learning difficulties but disliked being identified or classified as learning disabled. Ironically, although the STP students disliked being LD students, they recognized and appreciated their need for the support offered by the learning disabilities program.

Socially, most of the STP students had good social contacts and friends. Students in resource classes had more self-confidence and independence than those in self-contained classes and seemed to have an easier time locating and establishing friendships.

IMPACT OF EVALUATION PROVISIONS

The investigation of the impact of the evaluation provision concentrated on the following areas: how the STP students were identified, the evaluation and reevaluation procedures used, implications of the learning disabilities definition on the STP students' eligibility, actual and potential uses of the evaluation results and communication of the evaluation results to the STP students and their parents.

Identification. All but two of the STP students were identified, evaluated and determined eligible for placement in a learning disabilities program prior to entering high school. Two students were identified, evaluated and placed in a learning disabilities program after they entered high school. For both these students, identification, evaluation and placement occurred only after persistent parent requests that the school recognize the seriousness of their child's problem and his or her need for special help.

This pattern appears typical -- that students who are not identified in elementary or junior high school will rarely be identified in high school unless their parents are assertive advocates of their educational needs.

Faced with large numbers of high school students who are in academic difficulty and who could potentially be eligible for special education, the school district has taken a conservative approach to identification and evaluation. School policy requires that a student who is referred for a special education evaluation be very carefully screened to determine whether the student is likely to have a genuine learning disability, or whether he or she has learning difficulties that may require adjustment in his or her regular program but do not require special education. The careful screening coupled with a strict interpretation of the definition of learning disabilities results in few students who are referred being evaluated; this in turn results in fewer teacher referrals as teachers recognize that poor academic skills and lack of academic progress are not the sole determining factors in deciding whether or not a student should be evaluated. Persistent parent efforts to obtain an evaluation and special education services for their child, however, appear to counterbalance the conservative approach represented by the school screening process.

The intent of P.L. 94-142 is to assure that all potentially handicapped students are located and provided service. However, the size of the pool of potentially eligible students, the concern that students with academic problems might be mislabelled and fiscal constraints create a situation which discourages a liberal interpretation of the law and restricts the number of LD students identified, evaluated and served at the secondary level.

Evaluation Procedures. Once identified, the STP students received a comprehensive evaluation that included a core battery of intelligence and achievement tests as well as other tests of language development, perception, communication and cognitive processing. Because the selection of specific tests, other than those in the common core, is left to the discretion of the school psychologist responsible for the assessment, there is a wide disparity in the number and nature of the tests administered to each student. This lack of standardization makes it difficult to discover commonalities among the patterns or profiles of learning disabilities in the students tested.

Every effort is made during the psychological testing to identify the precise language, perceptual or processing deficiency that might be related to the student's poor academic performance. While this extensive testing does produce a more thoroughly detailed and refined diagnosis of the student's learning disability, it also results in certain cases in a testing process that is long, time-consuming and expensive.

All the STP students received tests or other procedures to assess their performance in all relevant areas. One source of information that could have been more systematically tapped, however, is the report from the student's guidance counselor. Many of the STP students had been in contact with their guidance counselors on more than a few occasions, and the guidance counselors had a unique perception of the students' school relationships and their ability to cope with regular classes and teachers. The reevaluation of high school LD students could be strengthened if a more systematic effort was made to solicit input from the student's guidance counselor, especially in those situations in which the student and guidance counselor have established a relationship that goes beyond the minimum required contact.

Eligibility. The evaluation of the STP students poignantly illustrate how two difficult situations that arise under the federal definition of learning disability (a severe discrepancy between potential and functional ability in one or more basic skill areas) create problems: (1) when a student's functional ability is initially very low but is in fact close to his or her potential; and (2) when a student's functional ability has improved, quite possibly because of special education instruction, so that the discrepancy originally present has been reduced or eliminated. One STP student was evaluated three times in elementary school before his potential ability (based on an intelligence test score) had improved enough to create a significant discrepancy between potential and functional ability and thereby establish his eligibility for special education services in junior high school. During elementary school, this student made no academic progress and was unhappy and frustrated.

Two other students revealed significant discrepancies on their initial evaluations but their recent reevaluations indicated one student's discrepancy had been markedly reduced and the other's had been eliminated. The former student was recommended for placement in a resource rather than self-contained program; the latter student recommended for dismissal. Although pleased with their progress, these two students, their parents and teachers agreed that the students should continue in their present placement.

Use of the Evaluation. The primary function of evaluation results is to establish the student's eligibility for special education. The findings of the evaluation have also been used to explain and document the LD student's needs to regular teachers who may attribute a student's poor class performance to other factors.

Beyond these two functions the results of the comprehensive special education evaluation appear not to have been exploited by the STP students' teachers. Although the teachers had access to the student's evaluation records and had some knowledge of the students' particular learning problems, few teachers used that information in planning the students' instruction. For example, teachers made only limited instructional distinction between students with auditory processing as compared with visual perception problems. And, despite the fact that the evaluations reveal poor reading comprehension to be a universal problem among LD students, systematic developmental instruction in reading was only available in one high school on an experimental basis.

The results of the evaluation are also not used as extensively as they might be to support program modification. The student evaluation results could be aggregated to determine common patterns of educational weakness and needs. These patterns could form one part of a needs assessment to establish areas requiring personnel and staff skill development and to determine special education program and service priorities.

Communication of Results. Although the results of the evaluation permit a precise definition of a student's learning disability, parents often did not understand what the definition meant. Parents were clear on two basic concepts: that their child had learning problems that required special attention, and that their child was not retarded. Most parents were able to describe their child's problems in terms of their academic strengths and weaknesses (e.g., not doing well in reading) but were not conversant with technical terms such as poor auditory processing.

The STP students (with one or two exceptions) accepted the fact that they were learning disabled but did not always understand what that meant. Both parents and school staff should provide LD students with sufficient information about what their learning problems are and how those problems may or may not affect their future. The STP students who understood their handicaps not only accepted them but also were able to incorporate that part of their self-perception into a total self-concept that was realistic and generally positive.

Summary. The STP study findings on the impact of the evaluation provisions suggest that some thought be addressed to the following:

- Although the evaluation procedures are thorough, the conservative approach to identification and screening of secondary school students referred by their teachers results in few secondary LD students being identified and evaluated unless there is active parental involvement.

- The evaluation procedures used to determine whether or not a student is learning disabled and the precise nature of his or her disability are time-consuming and expensive. The high degree of individualization and corresponding lack of standardization make it difficult to discover common profiles in the students tested. Since teachers do not use the precise learning disability information in instruction, and parents do not understand what the precise definition means, it may be time to reconsider the value of extensive psychological diagnostic testing.
- At the high school level, the guidance counselor often plays an active role in planning a student's regular program and resolving academic and social difficulties. Input from the guidance counselor should be part of the reevaluation.
- The definition of learning disabilities based on a discrepancy between potential and actual academic functioning may result in some students for whom special education services are clearly needed and/or beneficial being technically ineligible.
- The evaluation results serve two functions: to determine eligibility and to document, particularly with regular teachers, the students' need for special instructional modification. Consideration should be given to using the results as a guide to student instruction and as a basis for establishing staff and program development needs.
- Although parents understood their child's handicap in general terms, they were not conversant with the technical terms used in the precise definition of the specific disability. Both parents and LD students would benefit from explanations of the students' disability and how it might affect their future.

IMPACT OF INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAM PROVISIONS

The individualized education program provisions have two components -- an IEP document that contains certain specified content and an IEP meeting to which parents are invited and during which the document is developed. The STP Study investigated the impact of both these areas considering the impact of the legal requirements and how the implementation of the IEP provisions coincided with an ideal model of total educational program planning.

The IEP Document. The IEP document as it is presently construed by OSE[1] has has certain uses. First and foremost, it documents the focus of the individualized special education to be provided to the student and the related services he or she is to receive during the coming year. The IEP also provides a historical record of services provided, goals and objectives attempted and achieved, and improvement in the student's level of performance. Finally, the IEP documents the student's need for modification in the regular program and provides justification for requests for changes.

The content of the STP students' IEP document, while basically serving the purposes described above, lacked certain elements which would have made the IEP more functional. To be an accurate record of the individualized special education instruction a student receives, the goals and objectives on a student's IEP must reflect the unique focus of instruction targeted to the individual student. The goals and objectives of the STP students in self-contained classes were organized around the subject areas taught in the self-contained classes. Thus, there was one goal and related short-term objectives for English, math, world history, and biology. The goals and related objectives described the major curriculum areas of the course; often the same goal and objectives were indicated for several students. Instead of describing general curriculum goals, the IEPs of the self-contained students would be more instructive if the IEP goals and objectives focused on the particular learning needs of the individual LD student and described the basic behavioral or academic skills each student would acquire. While it is important that parents be made aware of the curriculum goals and objectives established for the self-contained courses, this information does not need to be part of each student's IEP.

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[1] OSE Policy Paper, Federal Register, Vol. 46, No. 12, January 19, 1981.

Unlike the goals and objectives of the self-contained students, the goals for the resource students were usually different for different students. The goals and objectives for the resource students were related either to process or content. Process goals are those that cut across content areas and focus on particular study skills such as being able to organize thoughts in sequence when preparing a written report. Content goals focus on a particular academic content area such as spelling or math.

The IEPs for the STP students were developed during the middle of the school year. Thus, the IEP goals and objectives served primarily as a guide to the instruction that occurred during the remainder of the school year. Because of changes in the student during the summer and because each student has a new schedule of classes and different teachers in the fall, the previous year's IEP may be seriously out-of-date.

Although the learning disabilities teachers reviewed each student's IEP from the previous year in the fall, they usually felt they needed to establish an instruction program based on the student's current needs, rather than on the goals and objectives indicated in his or her previous year's IEP.

The IEPs of the STP students indicated how much time the student would spend in regular classes but did not provide clearly and specifically the adaptations required for the student to be accommodated in his or her regular classes. Nor did the IEPs indicate the support the special education teacher or other program staff would provide to the regular teacher. Having this information on the student's IEP would make it more useful when communicating with regular teachers about the LD student's needs.

The IEP document, if it is to serve as a historical record of the student's progress, needs to provide some method for recording whether or not particular goals and objectives were achieved. Having some consistency in the measure of the student's current level of performance from year-to-year also would facilitate historical review of the student's improvement and progress.

IEP Conference. The parents of the STP students viewed the content of IEP document to be of only limited interest, but they found the IEP conference valuable because it provided an opportunity to discuss other issues related to the student's program. The timing of the IEP conference, while perhaps causing the IEP document to be less useful as a guide to instruction, is very appropriate for considering major educational planning issues.

The IEP conference for the STP students occurs in the late fall or early winter, at a time when parents can be informed about their child's progress before it is too late to make changes in his or her present classes or teacher, and before minor misunderstandings or inappropriate behavior become serious problems. Furthermore, at this time of the year, students are beginning to plan their course schedule for the coming year.

During the IEP conference, many topics beyond the components of the IEP were covered. Topics of interest to the STP parents included:

- career and post-high school education;
- priorities to be given to academic foundation and vocational preparation;
- selection of courses, teachers and classes;
- curriculum goals and objectives in the student's regular and special classes;
- grading standards for the student's classes;
- problems the student is having in school, particularly in his or her regular classes;
- activities parents may pursue with the student at home.

Within this list, four issues stand out as being of primary concern to parents. First, the parents were extremely concerned about the long-range direction their child should take. Many parents and students already had established long-term directions -- to attend college, to be employed as a skilled automotive technician, to work in the family business, to join the armed forces. These parents wanted to be sure their child's education program would foster these long-range prospects. Other parents were concerned about establishing a balance between academic and vocational preparation.

Second, parents were very concerned about their child's schedule of courses, classes and teachers. They wanted their son or daughter in classes he or she could handle and with teachers who were sympathetic and helpful. They wanted to be sure their child's regular teachers were fully informed about their child's problems and were making appropriate modifications.

Third, parents wanted to know how their child was doing academically and socially, and if there were any problems, what assistance was being provided.

Finally, parents wanted to be sure their child enjoyed school and passed his or her courses. To this end, parents wanted to know what they could do to help their child at home with his or her assignments.

As will be discussed in a later section, all of the STP students' families participated in some way in the IEP conference. Although the STP students were invited to their IEP conferences, they preferred not to go. In some cases, the resource teacher explained to the student what the teacher thought would be appropriate goals and objectives and encouraged the student to suggest his or her own. This separate meeting with the student seemed to satisfy both student and parents. But it did not permit an open airing of the disagreements between parents and students which not infrequently occurred.

Relationship of IEP to Total Educational Plan. The concept of an individualized educational program can be considered from two perspectives: (1) that of the legal requirements that define the content of the IEP document and prescribe the nature of the meeting at which the document is developed; and (2) that of a total individual educational planning model incorporating all phases of the student's educational program and the various decisions that are involved in establishing that program. The IEP (as legally defined) forms one small part of a student's total educational plan. It seems entirely reasonable that the parents of the STP student are concerned about the student's total education program. Thus, they used the IEP conference as a means of expanding upon the content of the IEP document to address concerns only peripherally related to the content of the IEP document.

The STP students had two resources to draw upon for advice and support in planning a total educational program: their special education teachers and the guidance counselor. Through the IEP meeting and other informal conversations, the special education teachers shared information with the student and his or her parents and often were able to initiate changes in the student's regular program -- classes, teachers, assignments, and occasionally grades. The guidance counselor offered information on colleges, careers, and employment and was responsible for any course or teacher changes and for the planning of the following year's schedule. The relationship between these two resources -- who have important responsibilities for developing and assuring the implementation of the student's total educational program -- is not well-defined. When these two resources coordinate their information and their advocacy, the student benefits; when they are not in communication or, especially, when they are in conflict, the student is confused and the implementation of his or her program suffers.

Summary. The STP study findings on the IEP suggest the following considerations:

- The IEP goals and objectives stated for LD self-contained students tended to reflect the curriculum goals and objectives for the subject areas covered in the self-contained classes not the unique learning needs of the LD student.
- In order to make effective use of the IEP as a means of communicating the LD student's needs to regular teachers, the adaptations the student requires in his or her regular classes and the support offered by the special education teachers need to be clearly specified.
- If the IEP is to serve as a historical record, there needs to be a method provided for indicating whether or not goals and objectives were achieved and whether or not there has been improvement in the student's level of performance.
- The time of year when the IEP is developed has a bearing on how useful its content is as a guide to instruction. Developing the IEP in the middle of the school year is administratively practical and has advantages for communicating with parents, but may reduce the length of time in which its content has direct instructional relevance.

- The STP parents viewed the IEP document with skepticism but valued the IEP conference as an opportunity to discuss other issues related to the student's total educational program, such as possible careers and post-high education, the schedule of classes and teachers, existing or potential academic or behavior problems, and actions that parents might pursue at home.
- Although LD students can and do participate in the development of their own IEPs, the STP students and parents found it more comfortable to discuss the IEP with school staff separately.
- The IEP relates to only a portion of an LD student's total educational program, yet it needs to reflect and be consistent with the decisions made regarding the total program. Involving both the LD students' special education teachers and guidance counselor in a coordinated planning effort should facilitate the integration of the student's IEP within his or her total educational program.

IMPACT OF PLACEMENT IN THE LEAST RESTRICTIVE ENVIRONMENT PROVISIONS

The STP study investigated two major issues regarding placement: (1) selection from a continuum of placement alternatives including self-contained classes and regular classes with resource class support; and (2) minimum separation from nonhandicapped students.

Continuum of Placement Alternatives. The school district where the STP students were enrolled offered two basic placement alternatives: self-contained classes, and regular academic classes supplemented by a resource class.

Students placed in the self-contained program took most (and usually all) of their academic courses in separate, self-contained special classes. Each class was composed of only other LD self-contained students. Each class had a different special teacher, was in a different room, and lasted a full "period." Thus, the self-contained students followed a class schedule and moved about the halls just like their nonhandicapped peers. The self-contained students also attended regular nonacademic and vocational classes. Self-contained classes were small (8-10 students) and disproportionately male. The students varied in reading ability and other basic skills and in their motivation and self-discipline. The classes were informal and contained an undercurrent of physical motion. The instructional emphasis was on maintaining order and control. The material covered was similar in content to that suggested for the regular academic courses but presented at a slower pace, stressing more concrete applications. Because of the small class size, all students were able to participate in class discussions, and the teacher was able to monitor the attention and task orientation of each student.

Self-contained programs were located only in certain designated high schools, and LD students requiring a self-contained program were bused from their home-based high school to the nearest program. Most of the STP students who were attending a program away from their home-based high school were not happy that they had to be separated from their neighborhood friends and felt a certain stigma was attached to going to a different school. On the other hand, one STP student mentioned that by attending a different school she was able to avoid her previous companions who had been a bad influence. Several of the STP students were being reassigned to their home-based school for the following year. This, too, was disturbing to many who had become attached to friends and teachers at their present school. These findings suggest that: (1) students with strong ties to their home-based school should be allowed to remain there; (2) that students currently assigned to a program in a nonhome-based school should be permitted to remain there if they wish; and (3) students who have strong, sound reasons for disassociating themselves from personal and social influences at their home-based high school should be given the option of placement in a program away from the home-based school.

Academically, the STP students in self-contained classes were able to do the basic work, understand the concepts presented, gain self-assurance, and take pride in their accomplishments. The students acquired new knowledge, ideas and concepts and improved their verbal fluency. They received passing grades and earned credits toward graduation, but they did not seem to improve their reading or other basic skills. This may be, in part, because there was only limited systematic remedial or developmental instruction in the basic skill areas.

But placement in the self-contained program did restrict the social relationships of some of the STP students. It was definitely more difficult to make acquaintances among the nonhandicapped students when contacts were limited to one or two nonacademic classes, lunch, and the time in-between classes. And because of the small number of girls in the LD self-contained program, the social contact available to them in the self-contained classes was particularly limited.

The STP students in self-contained programs and their parents valued the small classes, individual attention, slower-paced and less-demanding curriculum of the self-contained placement. All of the self-contained students knew that they would not survive in regular academic classes: a few had had bitter experiences that they wished never to repeat. Although the STP students knew their program carried with it a certain stigma, they did not perceive the stigma directed toward them and generally viewed it as insignificant or uniformed. The self-contained students viewed their placement as salvation from failure, pressure, frustration and exposure in the regular class.

Students placed in the resource program spent one class period a day in the resource class taking a subject called basic skills review. The remainder of their schedule consisted of regular academic, nonacademic and vocational classes. Resource classes were small, usually involving individual students working independently and consulting with the resource teacher periodically; there was relatively little interaction among the students. Each student's instruction was individualized with the primary emphasis on supporting the student's regular program: Resource teachers used the students' regular class assignments to develop basic skills such as organization and sequencing, note-taking and outlining of assigned material, reading, writing and spelling. If a student had no pressing regular class assignment he or she worked on correcting some basic skill deficiency such as spelling. Resource teachers maintained worksheets and individual assignments in reserve for those occasions. A few LD students used the resource class as a substitute for an academic subject, concentrating all their time in the resource class on one academic subject such as math.

A variation of the resource class placement was being on monitored status. A resource teacher was assigned to the monitored student to assist him or her whenever he or she requested assistance, or whenever any of the student's regular teachers indicated that he or she needed additional help.

In the school district where the STP students were enrolled, resource classes were available in every high school so all the resource students attended their home-based school.

The STP students in the resource program and their parents viewed the resource class as moderately effective in providing assistance and support to the students' regular academic program. But the resource students resented being labelled and associated with special education. They were articulate, socially mature and spent almost their entire day in regular classes; they thought of themselves as regular, normal students who needed some instructional support -- not as special or handicapped.

The effectiveness of the resource class depended on the student's initiative. Those STP students, who used the resource class as an opportunity to get assistance with difficult or confusing regular class assignments, or to develop their basic skills in an area in which they were weak, appreciated the support. Those who did not request assistance with either their regular assignments or a basic skill area and who were disinterested in teacher-initiated skill development activities made little progress and felt they derived little benefit.

Although coexisting in the same building, the resource and self-contained programs in which the STP students were placed were administratively separate and used separate instructional staff. Changing a student's placement from self-contained to resource (or the reverse) involved a formal process, changes in teachers and class schedules. The separation of the two programs resulted in discontinuities in the placement alternatives available to LD students -- viz., a resource student could not be placed in an LD self-contained math class even if there was no appropriate regular class in that subject, although the student could use his or her resource class period for math instruction.

Both the problems ensuing from assignments away from the home-based school and the discontinuities in programming would be eliminated if the resource and self-contained programs were integrated into a meaningful continuum with a common administrative structure. Such a continuum would permit staff to provide both resource-type support to the student's regular program and alternative self-contained academic subject area classes. This would permit a student to have aspects of both a self-contained and resource program -- a resource class to assist the student with his or her regular classes, and self-contained classes in English and/or math to provide instruction in basic skill deficiency areas. This type of program model would also permit a continuum of special education instructional services in a placement that was as close to the student's home as possible.

Mainstreaming. We considered two aspects of mainstreaming, the physical location of special classes within the building and the assignment of LD students to regular classes.

The physical location of the self-contained classes within the high school building has important implications for the LD students and their teachers. The STP students in one high school had all their self-contained classes located in a single hallway of the building.

This encouraged coordination and communication among the LD teachers and allowed mutual support in behavior management. Under this arrangement, the LD students moved about the school less frequently, preferring to remain on their own turf. The hallway developed a reputation among nonhandicapped students as a place "to stay away from." As a result of the close contact and common physical space, the LD students had developed a close protective social network. This social network tended to facilitate behavior control in the self-contained classes and to assist the LD students in accepting their learning disabilities classification. There were drawbacks to this arrangement, however. The close association of students occasionally became more anti-social than social and created minor disruptions in the hall. Although not restricted to the LD hall unless they chose to be, the LD students did have less need to move about the school, limiting their opportunities for social contact and the development of friendships with nonhandicapped students.

The STP students in the high school with scattered classes had more contact with nonhandicapped students as they moved about the halls but they had not established a common sense of a supportive community. Although it may not be feasible or even desirable to group all self-contained classes together, a common LD study area might provide similar refuge and opportunity for social interaction.

A second important aspect related to mainstreaming is the provision of instruction in regular classes. We identified three factors that need to be considered when determining the degree to which an LD student can be instructed with nonhandicapped students: ability level; motivation; and type of class.

The highly motivated, high-ability STP students succeeded in almost every class situation when provided with effective resource support. Students with low motivation and high ability did not do well in most of their regular classes. These students generally did not use the resource class effectively; and although the resource teacher could intercede with regular teachers on these students' behalf, this had limited impact unless the students' level of motivation changed.

Highly motivated students with moderate ability did well in their slower-paced academic classes and all their nonacademic classes, but they struggled in academic classes that required normal work and progressed at a normal pace. One resource period a day did not seem adequate to provide the regular class support and basic skill development these students needed, but the slow pace and reduced instructional demands of the self-contained classes were not appropriate either.

Highly motivated students with low ability survived regular nonacademic classes and very slow-paced academic classes but these students worked very hard and occasionally felt exposed and under pressure. They appreciated the regular classes for their social opportunities.

Nonmotivated students with moderate or low ability rarely learned, enjoyed or participated in a regular class unless it was a class that particularly interested them. For these students, the holding power (against dropping out) of the self-contained program became its principal value, because each year in school provided additional time to increase knowledge, maturity and preparation for a post-high school future.

Our observations of STP students in their regular classes and our conversations with the students and their teachers suggested that certain aspects of regular class instruction facilitate the success of the LD student:

- individual projects or assignments that permit motivated LD students to work diligently at their own speed;
- unobtrusive, individual assistance and encouragement;
- structured presentation of material with important points repeated;
- multiple sensory presentations, providing both verbal and written explanations;
- homework modifications allowing LD students to do fewer difficult problems;
- formal or informal opportunities for LD students to learn from their peers;
- opportunities to improve grades through additional homework and/or tests.

An important element to be considered when mainstreaming both self-contained and resource students is the supportive role played by special education and, particularly, special education teachers.

Learning disabilities teachers may help the LD student directly with the work assigned in the regular class. This includes reading and interpreting instructions, helping to organize ideas for written assignments or projects, offering explanations for the substantive material, proofreading papers and assignments, helping the student organize his or her time and follow the schedule or assignments, and providing alternative test arrangements (e.g., more time or verbal presentations).

Learning disabilities teachers also assist the student indirectly by explaining the student's handicap to regular teachers, suggesting modifications needed by the student, offering assistance to the regular teacher, mediating disputes between the student and his or her regular teachers, and advocating the student's need for changes in schedule, classes, teachers, or instructional methods.

Our observations suggest that resource teachers viewed their support role as primary and actively provided both direct and indirect student support, especially to the student's regular academic classes. Self-contained teachers viewed their primary role to be providing instruction in their academic area; consequently, the self-contained students received less direct and indirect support. Although self-contained teachers did, on occasion, administer tests for regular teachers and arranged for changes in student schedules, there was little opportunity for assistance on a day-to-day basis with the student's regular class assignments.

Summary. The results of the STP study related to the least restrictive environment suggest the following considerations:

- Self-contained academic classes were viewed positively by LD students and their parents for their small student size, individual attention, slow pace and reduced demands and for the protection these classes offer from failure, pressure, frustration and exposure.
- Resource classes were viewed as providing useful support by those students who used their time in the resource class effectively to correct a basic skill deficiency or to obtain assistance with their regular class work.

- Students in self-contained classes perceived stigma associated with their placement although not directed toward them personally. They accepted the stigma because they valued the program.
- STP students in resource classes also perceived stigma but resented having to be labelled to receive the limited support offered by the resource class.
- In the STP students' high schools, the resource and self-contained programs were administratively separate and used separate instructional staff. This created discontinuities in the placement alternatives available.
- Although the two placement alternatives, resource and self-contained classes, provided appropriate alternatives for most LD secondary students, there were some students with moderate ability and high motivation for whom one period a day in resource class was insufficient support for their regular class program. Yet, the slow pace and limited demands of most of the self-contained classes provided insufficient academic challenge and opportunity to learn. A true continuum of placements would provide more appropriate alternatives for these students.
- The STP self-contained students generally did not like having to attend a nonhome-based school although one student mentioned that it was good to be able to leave bad influences behind and believed there was less stigma associated with attending a special program in a different school.
- Once established in a program away from their home-based school, many STP students did not want to break ties with friends, teachers and familiar surroundings and routines to return to their home-based school unless they had maintained close ties with local neighborhood friends.
- Providing a full integrated placement continuum of resource to self-contained placements in each high school would eliminate problems ensuing from placements away from home-based schools and from the separate administrative and staffing structure of the resource and self-contained programs.

- The degree of mainstreaming experienced by the STP self-contained students was affected by the physical location of their classes. In one high school, all the self-contained classes were located in one hallway. Although this reduced the movement of the students about the building and thus the opportunity for contact with other students, it fostered a close protective social network among the LD self-contained students. Designating a room as a common study area would provide a protective refuge and social locus for LD students whose classes are scattered throughout the building.

- The successful integration of the STP students into regular classes depended on three factors: (1) the type of class; (2) the academic ability and skill of the student; and (3) the motivation of the student.

  -- High ability, highly motivated LD students succeeded in all their regular classes including classes for college-bound students.

  -- High ability, low motivated LD students did not do well in their regular classes unless the class tapped a particular interest.

  -- Moderate ability, highly motivated students did well in slow-paced academic classes and in vocational classes but normal paced regular academic classes proved too difficult despite the persistent hard work of these students.

  -- Moderate and low ability, low motivated students had difficulty in regular academic and vocational classes and survive in self-contained classes only because the demands in these classes were adjusted to their ability and interest level.

  -- Low ability, highly motivated students survived regular nonacademic and very slow-paced academic classes but they worked very hard and occasionally felt exposed and under pressure.

- There were specific instructional techniques and strategies that facilitated LD students' success in regular classes; these included: individual projects and assignments, unobtrusive individual encouragement, structured and repetitive presentations, multi-sensory presentations, and peer-peer instruction.

- Special education teachers, both resource and self-contained, provided the LD students with direct and indirect assistance with their regular classes. Direct assistance consisted of assisting the student with his or her assigned work; indirect assistance consisted of providing support to the student's teachers.
- Resource teachers viewed their primary role as one of providing direct and indirect support to the LD student's regular program.
- Self-contained teachers viewed their primary role as one of providing direct academic instruction; less time and attention was devoted to assisting self-contained students with their regular class assignments. Although the self-contained students attended fewer regular classes, their need for support in these classes was not fully met by self-contained academically-oriented classes.

IMPACT OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT AND PROCEDURAL SAFEGUARD PROVISIONS

The STP study considered parental involvement and procedural safeguards as somewhat overlapping areas. Parental involvement encompasses providing parents with information, encouraging their participation in the decision-making process, and resolving disagreements parents may have about the actions the school proposes. Some parental involvement activities are mandated by the procedural safeguards provisions of the law; some are professionally responsible practice.

Parent notification and participation. All the STP parents received required written notice of their child's evaluation and placement. They were also notified of the annual IEP meetings, first by mail and then by a phone call reminder.

The parents of the STP students were impressed by the school's efforts to keep them informed and involved. In addition to the IEP meeting attended by all but two of the STP parents (those two participated by phone), parents were in contact with special education staff at other times, particularly when important issues or crises arose. More formal efforts to inform and involve parents were also instituted. The self-contained program at one high school offered an evening parent-student meeting at which the teachers and guidance counselor discussed the course selection process, discussed the various courses and course sequences offered, outlined the graduation requirements and met with parents and students individually to plan each student's course schedule for the following year. The LD self-contained program director at the other high school developed student progress forms that were sent to parents each quarter. The forms described the student's attendance, class performance, and behavior.

The one area in which parents wished they were better informed and wanted to become more involved was helping their child at home. All of the STP parents were understanding of their child's problems, supportive of the school's efforts and very helpful when they were aware of what to do. Some communication system needs to be developed to tap the parental resource and channel it to the student's benefit.

Dispute Resolution. Although none of the STP parents had done more than suggest that they might take formal action or request a due process hearing, many of the STP parents and students had been or were involved in a dispute. The disputes generally were concerned with securing a comprehensive evaluation, obtaining placement in a private school, allowing the student to attend a program in another school, changing from a self-contained to resource placement, or withdrawing from special education.

Disputes were resolved through an informal meeting of parents, school staff and administrators, usually by compromise but occasionally by the school acquiesing to the parent's or student's request.

Although an independent evaluation may be used to resolve parent-school disputes, the STP parents who had obtained an independent evaluation, usually did so at their own expense before requesting the school to conduct an evaluation. Parents obtained an independent evaluation for their own knowledge and edification and because they wanted the best and most complete diagnosis of their child's problems that they could afford, not because they had any disagreement with the school's evaluation procedure or results.

The recent and current disputes that the STP students were involved in had two interesting characteristics. First, they involved the students themselves. Often a student's parents agreed with him or her but the school did not; almost as often, the parents disagreed with their child's position and the school agreed with one or the other or believed both positions appropriate. The opinions of a mature but not-yet-18-years-old teenager need to be respected and some open yet informal dispute settlement mechanisms developed to assure his or her opinion finds expression and is heard.

The second interesting characteristic of these disputes was their bureaucratic nature. Students and parents resented being referred from one person to another to get a response to simple questions or requests, having to wait for placement because records were misplaced, being reassigned to a different school without being provided an opportunity to explain why they believed the reassignment to be harmful or without such amenities as being introduced to the new staff, being provided with the names of a contact person, or being given a tour of the new building.

Summary. The findings of the STP study suggest the following considerations:

- STP students' parents were impressed by the school's many formal and informal efforts to keep them informed and involved.
- Several of the STP students' parents expressed disappointment that they could not be more actively involved in helping their child at home; some system should be developed to channel parental concern into productive supportive activity.
- Disputes between parents and the school were usually resolved through an informal meeting.
- Although several parents had arranged for an independent evaluation of their child, they did so for their own edification not because they were dissatisfied with the school's evaluation procedure.
- The STP students occasionally were involved in disputes in which they played a prominent role. Sometimes they were supported by their parents but not the school; sometimes by the school but not their parents. When a student and his or her parents disagree the school is in an awkward position and open and informal mechanisms for resolving these triangles need to be developed.
- Disagreements between parents and school were often characterized by their bureaucratic nature, shifts in a student's educational environment triggered by central administrative action without sufficient humanistic concern.

CONCLUSION

The findings of the STP study suggest that an investigation of the impact of P.L. 94-142 on students and their families must consider the particular population and situation in which the implementation of the law occurs. The provisions of P.L. 94-142 take on a somewhat different hue when viewed from the perspective of their impact on mildly handicapped adolescent students in public high schools.

The impact of the evaluation provisions is affected by the large number of students who are in academic trouble and who need some form of educational support.

The impact of the IEP provisions is affected by the concern of LD students and their parents for problems that go beyond the content of the IEP document; concerns relating to career and post-high school plans, vocational training, scheduling of courses, selection of teachers, prevention of failure and assurance of graduation.

The impact of the least restrictive environment provisions is affected by the desire of secondary students to remain with their friends and with familiar teachers and school routines. It is also affected by the range and variability in the types of regular classes available in public high schools and the willingness of LD students to compensate for their academic weaknesses with increases in academic effort.

The impact of parental involvement and procedural safeguards is affected by the increased maturity and need for self-determination expressed by secondary students which occasionally put them at odds with their parents and the difficulties of cutting through the formal bureaucracy existing in the high school structure.

Thus, the intersection of P.L. 94-142 provisions with learning disabled secondary students in public high schools creates a special and unique set of impacts on the student and his or her family.